Sold by W.m Marshal at ye Bible in Newgate Street.

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Σοφεσις Πνευματικη.

Or the

CAUSES, WAIES & MEANS

OF

Understanding the Mind of God

As revealed in his Word, with Assurance therein.

AND

A Declaration of the Perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the External Means of the Interpretation of them.

By *John Owen*, D. D.

Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law, Psal. 119.18. *Give me understanding and I shall live*, v. 144.

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THE PREFACE.

I *Shall in a few words, give the* Reader *an account of the Occaſion and deſign of the ſmall enſuing Diſcourſe. Some while ſince I publiſhed a Treatiſe about the* Reaſon of Faith, *or the* Grounds whereon we believe the Scripture to be the Word of God *with that Faith which is our Duty, and prerequired unto all other acceptable Obedience. But although this be the firſt fundamental Principle of* Supernatural Religion, *yet is it not ſufficient unto*

any of the Ends thereof, (that we believe the Scripture to be a Divine Revelation) unleſs we underſtand the Mind and Will of God therein revealed. At leaſt the Knowledge and Underſtanding of thoſe things wherein our preſent Duty and future State of Bleſſedneſs or Miſery *are immediately concerned, are no leſs indiſpenſibly neceſſary unto us, then is the Belief of the Scripture to be the Word of God. To declare the way and means whereby we may* aſſuredly *attain that underſtanding, is the Deſign of the enſuing Diſcourſe; as thoſe whereby we come infallibly to believe the Scripture with Faith Divine and Supernatural, are the Subject of the former. My principal ſcope in both hath been to manifeſt that ſuch is the abundant* Goodneſs, Wiſdom and Grace of God, *in granting unto us the ineſtimable benefit of his Word, that no perſons whatever, ſhall*

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or can come ſhort of the Advantage intended by it, but through their own ſinful negligence and ingratitude, the higheſt crimes in things of a ſpiritual and eternal concernment. For he hath given ſuch convincing Evidences *of the procedure or emanation of the Scripture from himſelf, by the Divine Inſpiration of the Penmen thereof; and ſo* plainly declared *his Mind and Will therein, as unto the Faith and Obedience which he requires of any or all ſorts of perſons in their various circumſtances, that every one who takes* care of his own preſent and eternal welfare, *may and ſhall in the due uſe of the means by him appointed, and diſcharge of the duties by him preſcribed unto that end, with a due Dependance on the Aid and Aſſiſtances, which he will not withhold from any who diligently ſeek him, infallibly attain that meaſure of the knowledge of his Mind and Will,*

with full assurance therein, as will be sufficient to guide him unto eternal Blessedness. The same measure of Divine Knowledge is not required in all and every one, that they may live unto God, and come unto the enjoyment of him. The Dispensation of God towards Mankind in Nature, Providence, and Grace, is an invincible Spring of such variety among them, as will not allow a prescription of the same measures of Knowledge unto all to have a consistency with Divine Wisdom and Goodness; and a supposition of it would bring confusion into all the Order of things and persons which is of Divine Constitution. Nor is it pretended that any one man may or can have, in the use of any means whatever, a full comprehension of all Divine Revelations in this life, nor perhaps of any one of them; or that all men in the use of the same means prescribed unto them,

shall

ſhall have the ſame conceptions of all things revealed. The Scripture was given for the uſe of the whole Church, *and that in all Ages, States and Conditions, with reſpect unto that inconceivable variety of Circumſtances, which all ſorts of cauſes do diſtribute the whole multitude of them into. Wherefore the Wiſdom of God therein, hath ſuited it ſelf unto the Inſtruction of* every individual Believer, *unto the moment of his entrance into Eternity. That any one of them, that any ſociety of them ſhould have a* perfect comprehenſion *of the entire Revelation of God, or a perfect underſtanding of the whole Scripture, and every part of it, with all that is contained therein, was never required of them in* a way of Duty, *nor ever deſigned unto them in a way of Priviledge. For beſides that he hath repleniſhed it with* unfathomable ſtores, *unſearchable Treaſures of Divine Myſteries,*

ries, wherein we cannot find out the Almighty unto Perfection, *and hath provided* another ſtate *for the comprehenſion of that by ſight, which is the Object of Adoration and Admiration in Believing; ſuch Knowledge is not neceſſary unto any, that they may lead the life of Faith, and diſcharge the Duties thereof in all holy Obedience unto God. Yea, ſuch a Knowledge and Comprehenſion would be inconſiſtent with that ſtate and condition wherein we are to walk with God, according to the Tenor of the Covenant of Grace, and during the continuance thereof. But the ſubſtance of what we plead for is, that ſuch is the Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Love of God towards Mankind, in the* Grant *that he hath made unto them of the Revelation of himſelf, his Mind and Will in the Scripture, as that no one perſon doth, or can fail from attaining all that underſtanding in it and of it, which is* any way need-

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ful *for his Guidance to live unto God in his Circumſtances and Relations, ſo as to come unto the bleſſed enjoyment of him, but by the ſinful neglect of the Means and Dutys preſcribed by him for the attainment of that underſtanding, and want of a due dependance on thoſe ſpiritual Aids and Aſſiſtances which he hath prepared for that end. By what waies and means he hath thus provided for the aſſurance and ſecurity of all men, in things of their eternal concernment, and what are thoſe Acts of his Wiſdom, Power and Grace which he exerts for that end, namely, that they may both* believe the Scripture to be his Word, *and* underſtand his Mind revealed therein, *both according unto what is required of them in a way of duty, ſo as in both they may be accepted with him, is the Deſign of this and the other forementioned Diſcourſe to declare. And they are both of them principally intended*

tended for the uſe of the ordinary ſort of Chriſtians, who know it their concernment to be eſtabliſhed in the Truth of thoſe things wherein they have been inſtructed. For they are frequently attacqued with thoſe Queſtions, How do you know the Scripture to be the Word of God? *And* what Aſſurance have you that you underſtand any thing contained in them, ſeeing all ſorts of perſons are divided about their ſenſe & meaning, nor do you pretend unto any immediate Inſpiration to give you Aſſurance? *And if on theſe enſnaring enquiries, they are caſt under any doubts or perplexities in their minds, as it often falls out amongſt them who have not diligently weighed the Principles of their own Profeſſion, the next Inſinuation is, that they ought to betake themſelves either to ſome other preſent Guide, as their own Light and Reaſon, or make a compleat Reſignation of themſelves and the*

conduct

conduct of their Souls, unto the pre-tended *Authority and Guidance of other men. To give Assurance and Security unto their minds, that they neither are, nor can be deceived in their belief of the Scriptures to be the Word of God, and the understanding of his Mind and Will therein, so far as their present Obedience and Eternal Happiness are concerned, and that unto this end, they need not be beholding unto any, nor depend on any but* God himself, *in the use of known and obvious Means or Duties, is designed in these small Treatises. And upon the* Principles *evinced and confirmed in them, I have yet proposed a farther Enquiry, namely,* What conduct in these times of great contests about the Assurance of Faith, & the Causes of it, every one that takes care of his own Salvation, ought to betake himself unto, that he may not be deceived nor miscarry in the end? *And this is designed with espe-*

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cial Reſpect unto the Church of Rome, *which vehemently pretends unto the ſole infallible conduct in theſe things. But probably the near Approach of the daily expected, and earneſtly deſired* hour of my Diſcharge *from all farther ſervice in this world, will prevent the Accompliſhment of that Intention. In the continual Proſpect hereof do I yet live and rejoyce, which among other Advantages unſpeakable, hath already given me an Inconcernment in thoſe Oppoſitions, which the Paſſions or Intereſts of men engage them in, of a very near Alliance unto, and ſcarce diſtinguiſhable from that which the Grave will afford. I have but one thing more to acquaint the* Reader *withall, wherewith I ſhall cloſe this Preface, and it is the ſame with that wherewith the Preface unto the former Diſcourſe is concluded. This alſo belongeth unto the ſecond part of my Diſcourſe, concerning the Diſpenſation and Operations*

of the Holy Spirit. The first Volume on that Subject, some years since publish-ed, having found good Acceptance a-mong them that are Godly and Learned, both at home and abroad. I have been desired to give out what yet remaineth for the compleat Accomplishment of what I had designed thereon, in this way of lesser Discourses, that may have their use, before the whole be finished, or whether ever it be so or no.

ΣΥΝΕΣΙΣ

ΣΥΝΕΣΙΣ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΗ.

CHAP. I.

Uſurpation of the Church of Rome, *with reference unto the Interpretation of the Scripture, or right underſtanding of the mind of God therein. Right and Ability of all Believers as to their own duty herein aſſerted. Importance of the Truth propoſed. The main Queſtion ſtated. The principal efficient Cauſe of the Underſtanding which Believers have in the Mind and Will of God as revealed in the Scriptures, the Spirit of God himſelf. General aſſertions to be proved. Declared in ſundry particulars. Inferences from them.*

OUR belief of the Scriptures to be the Word of God, or a Divine Revelation, and our underſtanding of the mind and will of God as revealed in them,

are the *two Springs* of all our Interest in Christian Religion. From them are all those streams of Light and Truth derived, whereby our souls are watered, refreshed, and made fruitful unto God. It concerneth us therefore greatly to look well to those *Springs* that they be neither stopped nor defiled, and so render'd useless unto us. Though a man may have pleasant streams running by his habitation, and watering his inheritance, yet if the Springs of them be in the power of others, who can either divert their course or poison their waters, on their pleasure he must always depend for the benefit of them.

Thus hath it faln out in the world in this matter; so hath the Church of *Rome* endeavoured to deal with all Christians. Their main endeavour is to seize those *Springs* of Religion into their own power. The Scripture it self they tell us, cannot be believed to be the word of God with Faith Divine, but upon the proposal and testimony of their Church; thereby is one *Spring* secured. And when it is believed so to be, it *ought* not to be interpreted, it *cannot* be understood, but according to the mind, judgment, and exposition of the same Church; which in like manner secures the other.

And

And having of old poſſeſſed theſe *Springs* of Chriſtian Religion, they have dealt with them according as might be expected from unjuſt invaders of other mens Rights, and *malæ fidei poſſeſſoribus*. So when the *Philiſtines* contended for the Wells which *Abraham* and *Iſaac* had digged, when they had got poſſeſſion of them, they *ſtopped* them up. And when the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* had gotten the *Key of Knowledg*, they would neither enter into the Kingdom of God themſelves, nor ſuffer thoſe that would, ſo to do; as our Saviour tells us. For the one of theſe *Springs*, which is the Letter of the Scripture it ſelf, when it ought to have gone forth like the *waters of the Sanctuary*, to refreſh the Church and make it fruitful unto God, they partly ſtopped it up, and partly diverted its courſe, by ſhutting it up in an *unknown tongue*, and debarring the people from the uſe of it. And in the exerciſe of their pretended Right unto the other *Spring*, or the *ſole interpretation* of the Scripture, they have poyſoned the ſtreams, with all manner of Errors and Deluſions, ſo as that they became not only uſeleſs, but noxious and pernitious unto the Souls of men. For under the pretence hereof, namely, that their Church hath the *ſole*

power of interpreting the Scriptures, and *cannot erre* therein, have they obtruded all their Errors with all their abominations in Worſhip and Practiſe on the minds and conſciences of men.

The firſt of theſe *Springs* I have in a former Diſcourſe on this Subject taken out of their hand, ſo far as we our ſelves are concerned therein, or I have vindicated the juſt Rights of all Chriſtians thereunto, and given them poſſeſſion thereof. This I did by declaring the true grounds and reaſons whereon we do, and whereon any can truly *believe the Scripture to be the word of God*, with Faith divine and ſupernatural. For beſides other advantages wherewith the knowledge of that Truth is accompanied; it diſpoſſeſſeth the *Romaniſts* of their claim unto this Fountain of Religion, by evidencing that we do, and ought thus to believe the Divine Original of the Scripture, without any regard to the Teſtimony or Authority of their Church.

That which now lyeth before us is the Vindication of the Right of all Believers unto the *other Spring alſo*, or a right underſtanding of the mind and will of God, as revealed in the Scripture, ſuitably unto the duty that God requireth of them in their

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ſeveral capacities and conditions.

What is neceſſary unto the *interpretation of difficult places* and paſſages in the Scripture, what meaſure of underſtanding of the mind and will of God as revealed therein, is required of perſons in their various conditions, as they are *Teachers* of others, or among the number of them that are to be taught; ſhall among other things be afterwards ſpoken unto. My principal Deſign is to manifeſt, That *every Believer may in the due uſe of the means appointed of God for that End, attain unto ſuch a full aſſurance of underſtanding in the Truth, or all that knowledge of the mind and will of God revealed in the Scripture, which is ſufficient to direct him in the life of God, to deliver him from the dangers of Ignorance, Darkneſs, and Error, and to conduct him unto Bleſſedneſs.* Wherefore, as unto the Belief of the Scripture it ſelf, ſo as unto the Underſtanding, Knowledge and Faith of the things contained therein, we do not depend on the *Authoritative Interpretation* of any Church or perſon whatever. And although ordinary Believers are obliged to make diligent and conſcientious uſe of the *Miniſtry of the Church* among other things, as a means appointed of God to lead, guide, and inſtruct

them in the knowledge of his Mind and Will revealed in the Scripture, which is the principal End of that Ordinance; yet is not their understanding of the Truth, their Apprehension of it, and Faith in it, to rest upon, or to be resolved into their Authority, who are not appointed of God to be *Lords of their Faith*, but *helpers of their joy*. And hereon depends all our interest in that great Promise, That we *shall be all taught of God*. For we are not so, unless we do learn from him, and by him, the things which he hath revealed in his Word.

And there is not any Truth of greater importance for Men to be Established in. For unless they have a *full assurance of understanding in themselves*, unless they hold their perswasion of the sense of Scripture Revelations from God alone, if their Spiritual judgment of Truth and Falsehood depend on the Authority of Men, they will never be able to undergo any suffering for the Truth, or to perform any Duty unto God in a right manner. The Truths of the Gospel, and the ways of Religious Worship, for which any Believer may be called to suffer in this world, are such as about *whose Sense* and *Revelation in the Scripture*, there is great difference and controversie among

among Men. And if there be not an assured, yea infallible way and means of communicating unto all Believers, a knowledg of the Mind and Will of God in the Scripture concerning those things so controverted, the grounds whereof are fixed in their own minds, but that they do wholly depend on the Expositions and *Interpretations* of other Men, be they who they will, they cannot *suffer* for them either cheerfully or honourably, so as to give glory to God, or to obtain any solid peace and comfort in their own Souls. For if a man under his *Sufferings* for his Profession, can give himself no other account but this, That what he suffers for, is the Truth of God revealed in the Scripture, because such or such whom he hath in veneration or Esteem do so affirm, and have so instructed him; or because this is the Doctrine of this or that Church, the *Papal* or the *reformed Church*, which it hath prescribed unto him; he will have little joy of his Suffering in the End. Yea, there is that which is yet worse in this matter as things are stated at this day in the World. Truth and Error are promiscuously *persecuted* according unto the Judgment, Interest, and Inclinations of them that are in power. Yea, sometimes both

both Truth and Error are *perſecuted* in the ſame place, and at the ſame time, upon Errors differing from both. Diſſent is grown almoſt all that is criminal in Chriſtian Religion all the World over. But in this State of things, unleſs we grant Men an immediate *underſtanding of their own* in the Mind and Will of God, yea, a *full aſſurance* therein, there will be nothing whereby a Man who ſuffers for the moſt important Truths of the Goſpel, can in his own ſoul and conſcience diſtinguiſh himſelf from thoſe who ſuffer in giving Teſtimony unto the moſt pernitious Errors; For all outward means of confidence which he hath, they may have alſo.

It behoveth therefore all thoſe who may poſſibly be called *to ſuffer for the Truth* in any ſeaſon or on any occaſion, to aſſure their minds in this Fundamental Truth; that they may have in themſelves a certain undeceiving underſtanding of the Mind and Will of God, as revealed in the Scripture, independent on the Authority of any Church or Perſons whatſoever; the uſe of whoſe Miniſtry herein we do yet freely and fully allow.

Nor indeed without a ſuppoſition hereof can any man perform any Duty to God in

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an acceptable manner, ſo as that his Obedience may be the *Obedience of Faith*, nor can upon good grounds dye in peace, ſince the *Juſt ſhall live by his own Faith alone.*

Wherefore our preſent Enquiry is;

How Believers or any men whatever, may attain a right underſtanding in their own Minds of the meaning and ſenſe of the Scriptures as to the Doctrine or Truths contained in them, in anſwer unto the Deſign of God, as unto what he would have us know or believe, Or,

How they may attain a right perception of the Mind of God in the Scripture, and what he intends in the Revelation of it, in oppoſition unto Ignorance, Errors, Miſtakes, and all falſe apprehenſions, and ſo in a right manner to perform the Duties which by them we are inſtructed in.

In anſwer unto the enquiry propoſed concerning the knowledge and underſtanding of Believers in the Mind of God, as revealed in the Scriptures; I ſhall conſider Firſt, the *Principal Efficient Cauſe.* And Secondly, *All the means*, Internal and External which are appointed of God thereunto.

As to the firſt of theſe, or the Principal Efficient Cauſe of the due knowledge and underſtanding

underſtanding of the Will of God in the Scripture, it is the *Holy Spirit of God himſelf alone.* For,

There is an eſpecial work of the Spirit of God on the Minds of Men, communicating Spiritual Wiſdom, Light, and Underſtanding unto them, neceſſary unto their diſcerning and apprehending aright the Mind of God in his Word, and the underſtanding of the Myſteries of Heavenly Truth contained therein; And I ſhall add hereunto; That among all the falſe and fooliſh imaginations that ever Chriſtian Religion was attacqued or diſturbed withal, there never was any, there is none more pernitious than this, That the Myſteries of the Goſpel are ſo expoſed unto the common Reaſon and Underſtanding of Men, as that they may know them and comprehend them in an *uſefull manner*, and *according to their Duty*, without the effectual Aid and Aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God.

It is the fondeſt thing in the World to imagine, That the Holy Ghoſt doth any way teach us, but *in and by our own Reaſons* and Underſtandings. We renounce all *Enthuſiaſmes* in this matter, and plead not for any immediate *Prophetical Inſpirations.* Thoſe who would prohibit us the uſe of our

our Reaſon in the things of Religion, would deal with us, as the *Philiſtines* did with *Sampſon*, firſt put out our Eyes, and then make us grind in their Mill. Whatever we know, be it of what ſort it will, we know it in, and by the uſe of our own Reaſon; and what we conceive, we do it by our own underſtanding. Only the Enquiry is, whether there be not an eſpecial Work of the Holy Spirit of God, *enlightning our Minds*, and enabling our Underſtandings to perceive and apprehend his Mind and Will as revealed in the Scripture, and without which, we cannot ſo do. The ſubſtance therefore of the Enſuing Diſcourſe may be reduced unto theſe Heads.

1. That we ſtand not in need of any new divine *Afflations*, or immediate *Prophetical inſpirations* to enable us to underſtand the Scripture, or the Mind and Will of God, as revealed therein. Neither did the Prophets or Holy Penmen of the Scripture *learn the Mind of God* in the Revelations made unto them, and by them unto the Church, meerly from the *Divine Inſpiration* of them. Thoſe immediate Inſpirations unto them, were in the ſtead and place of the *written Word*, and no otherwiſe. After they did receive them, they were by the ſame means to inquire into

into the Mind and Will of God in them; as we do it, in and by the Written Word. 1 *Pet.* 1. 10, 11.

2. That as to the right understanding of the Mind of God in the Scripture, or our coming unto the *Riches of the full assurance of understanding in the acknowledgment of the Mystery of God*; we do not, nor need to depend on the *Authoritative Instruction* or Interpretation of the Scripture by *any Church* whatever, or all of them in the World, though there be great use of the true Ministry of the Church unto that End.

3. That in the *meer exercise of our own natural Reason and Understanding*, with the help of External means, we cannot attain that knowledge of the Mind and Will of God in the Scripture, of the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost therein, which is required of us in a way of Duty, without the special aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God. Wherefore principally it is asserted,

4. That there is an especial work of the Holy Spirit in the *supernatural Illumination* of our Minds, needful unto the End proposed; namely, That we may aright and according unto our Duty, understand the Mind of God in the Scripture our selves, or Interpret it unto others.

5.

5. That hereby alone is that full *assurance of understanding in the knowledge of the Mystery of God*, his Truth and Grace to be obtained, whereby any man may answer the Mind and Will of God, or comply with his own duty in all that he may be called to do or suffer in this World, in his especial Circumstances. Wherefore,

6. The certainty and assurance that we may have, and ought to have of our right understanding the Mind of God in the Scripture; either in general, or as to any especial Doctrine, doth not depend upon, is not resolved into any *immediate Inspiration or Enthusiasme*; it doth not depend upon, nor is resolved into the *Authority of any Church* in the World; nor is it the *Result of our Reason and Understanding* meerly in their natural Actings, but as they are Elevated, Enlightned, Guided, Conducted by an Internal efficacious work of the Spirit of God upon them.

7. That whereas the means of the right Interpretation of the Scripture and understanding of the Mind of God therein, are of two sorts; First, such as are prescribed unto us in a way of Duty, as *Prayer*, *Meditation* on the Word it self, and the like; and Secondly, *Disciplinary*, in the Accommodation

modation of *Arts and Sciences* with all kind of Learning unto that Work; the first sort of them doth intirely depend on a supposition of the Spiritual Aids mentioned, without which, they are of no use; and the latter is not only consistent therewith, but singularly subservient thereunto; wherefore the nature and use of all these means, shall be afterwards declared.

This being the substance of what is designed in the ensuing Discourse, it is evident, that the Positions before laid down concerning the *especial Work* of the Spirit on the Minds of Men, in communicating Spiritual Wisdom, Light, and Knowledge unto them, is in the first place, and principally to be confirmed, as that whereon all the other Assertions do absolutely depend.

It is the Scripture it self alone from whence the Truth in this matter can be learned; and by which alone what is proposed concerning it must be tried; therefore as unto this first part of this Work I shall do little more than plead the express Testimonies thereof. When we come to consider the way and manner of the Communication of these spiritual Aids unto us, the whole matter will be more fully stated; and such Objections as may be laid against

againſt our Aſſertion be removed out of the way.

And there are two Ends deſigned in this undertaking. 1. That which the *Evangeliſt Luke* propoſed in his writing the Goſpel unto *Theophilus*; namely, *That he might know the certainty of the things wherein he had been inſtructed*, Luke 1. 4. When we have been inſtructed in the Truth of the Goſpel, and do give our Aſſent thereunto, yet it is needful that we ſhould examine the grounds and reaſons of what we do believe thereon, that we may have a *certainty* or *full aſſurance* of them. This therefore we ſhall direct; namely, How a man may come to an *undeceiving Perſwaſion and full Aſſurance* that the things wherein he hath been inſtructed, and which he knows, are true and according to the Mind of God, ſo as that he may thereon be *no more toſſed to and fro with every wind of Doctrine*, by the ſlight of Men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

2. We deſign to enquire what *conduct* unto this End a Man that takes care of his Salvation, and who is convinced that he muſt give an account of himſelf unto God, ought in this matter, as to the right underſtanding

underſtanding of the Mind and Will of God in the Scripture *to betake himſelf unto.* And as I ſhall ſhew that there is no ſafety in depending on *Enthuſiaſmes*, or immediate pretended infallible Inſpirations; nor on the *pretended Infallibility* of any Church: *So the holy Spirit of God enlightning our Minds in the Exerciſe of our own Reaſon or Underſtanding, and in uſe of the means appointed of God unto that End, is the only ſafe Guid to bring us unto the full Aſſurance of the Mind and Will of God, as Revealed in the Scripture.*

Wherefore the whole Foundation of this Work lies in theſe two things. (1.) That there is ſuch an *eſpecial Work* of the Holy Spirit on our Minds, enabling them to underſtand the Scriptures in a right manner, or to know the Mind of God in them. (2.) In ſhewing what is the *eſpecial Nature* of this Work, what are the effects of it upon our Minds, and how it differs from all *Enthuſiaſtical Inſpirations*, and what is the true Exerciſe of our Minds in compliance therewith; And theſe things we ſhall firſt enquire into.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The general Aſſertion confirmed with teſtimonies of the Scripture. Pſal. 119. *verſ.* 18 *opened at large.* Objections *anſwered*, 2 Cor. 3. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. *Explained*, Iſa. 25. Luk. 1. 24, 45. *opened*, Epheſ. 1. 17, 18, 19. *Explained and pleaded, in confirmation of the Truth*, Hoſ. 14. 9.

THe whole of our Aſſertion is comprized in the Prayer of the Pſalmiſt; *Pſal.* 119. 18. גל עיני ואביטה נפלאות מתורתך *Open thou mine Eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of thy Law.* The ſame requeſt for the Subſtance of it is repeated ſundry times in the ſame *Pſalm*, verſ. 33. 34, *&c.* *Thus* he prayed, That it may be eſteemed our duty to pray in *like manner*, is the ſubſtance of what we plead for. What we pray for from God, that we have not in, and of our ſelves; as the Antient Church conſtantly pleaded againſt the *Pelagians.* And what we pray for according to the Mind of God, that we do receive. Wherefore our diſcerning, our underſtanding of the wonderful things of the Law, is not

of our ſelves; it is that which is *given* us, that which we receive from God.

But that the force of our Argument from this Teſtimony, may be the more evident; the *Words* or *Termes* of it muſt be explained, that we may ſee whether they be equivalent unto, or of the ſame ſignification with them laid down in our Aſſertion.

1. That which is the *Object* of the Underſtanding prayed for, that in the Knowledge whereof the Pſalmiſt would be illuminated, is תורה. The word ſignifies *Inſtruction*; and being referred unto God, it is his Teaching or Inſtruction of us by the Revelation of himſelf, the ſame which we intend by the Scripture. When the Books of the Old Teſtament were compleated, they were for diſtinction-ſake, diſtributed into כתובים תורה— and נביאים— or the *Law*, the *Pſalmes* and the *Prophets*; *Luke* 24. 44. Under that Diſtribution *Torah* ſignifies the five Books of *Moſes*. But whereas theſe Books of *Moſes* were (as it were) the Foundation of all future Revelations under the Old Teſtament, which were given in the Explication thereof: all the Writings of it are uſually called *the Law*, Iſa. 8. 20. By the *Law* therefore in this place, the *Pſalmiſt*

Pſalmiſt underſtands all the Books that were then given unto the Church by Revelation for the Rule of its Faith and Obedience. And that by the *Law* in the *Pſalmes* the written Law is intended, is evident from the firſt of them, wherein he is declared Bleſſed, who *meditateth therein Day and Night*; *Pſal.* 1. 2. Which hath reſpect unto the Command of Reading and Meditating on the *Books thereof* in that manner, *Joſh.* 1. 8. That therefore which is intended by this Word, is the entire Revelation of the Will of God, given unto the Church for the Rule of its Faith and Obedience; that is the Holy Scripture.

2. In this Law there are נפלאות— *wonderful things*: פלא— ſignifies to be *wonderful*, to be *hidden*, to be *great* and *high*: that which men by the uſe of Reaſon cannot attain unto, or underſtand. Hence נפלאות— are things that have ſuch an Impreſſion of Divine Wiſdom and Power upon them, as that they are juſtly the Object of our Admiration. That which is too hard for us; as *Deut.* 17. 8. כי יפלא ממך דבר— *If a matter be too hard for thee*, hid from thee. And it is the name whereby the miraculous Works of God are expreſſed; *Pſalm.* 77. 11. 78. 11. Wherefore theſe wonderful things

of the Law, are thoſe Expreſſions and Effects of Divine Wiſdom in the Scripture, which are above the Natural Reaſon and Underſtandings of Men to find out and comprehend. Such are the Myſteries of Divine Truth in the Scripture; eſpecially, becauſe Chriſt is in them, whoſe Name is פלא, or *Wonderful*; *Iſa.* 9. 6. For all the great and marvellous Effects of infinite Wiſdom meet in him. Theſe things and Doctrines God calls רבי תורה *Hoſ.* 8. 12. I have written unto him the *great things of my Law*; and they were counted by them כמו זר--- as a *ſtrange thing*. Becauſe they were *Wonderful* in themſelves, they neglected and diſpiſed them, as that which was Forraign and *alien* from them, which belonged not unto them. So deal many with the Myſteries of the Goſpel at this day; becauſe they are heavenly, Spiritual, in themſelves marvellous, hidden, and above the Underſtanding of the Natural Reaſon of Men; that is, They are נפלאות—they reject and diſpiſe them as things *alien* and forreign unto their Religion. Wherefore, the *Wonderful things* of the Scripture, are thoſe Myſteries of Divine Truth, Wiſdom, and Grace, that are revealed and contained therein, with their eſpecial Reſpect unto Jeſus Chriſt.

3. Three

3. Three things are ſuppoſed in the words concerning theſe wonderful things:

1. That they are *recorded*, laid up or treaſured in the Law or Scripture, and no where elſe; ſo as that from thence alone, are they to be learned and received. *Behold wonderful things out of the Law.* That alone is the ſacred παραταθήκη, or repoſitory of them. There are wondrous things in the works of Nature and Providence; and much of them is contained in the Treaſury of Reaſon, wherein it may be diſcerned. But theſe are ſtored in the *Law* only, and no where elſe.

2. That it is our Duty to *behold*, to *diſcern*, to *underſtand* them, to have an inſpection into them, and our great Priviledge when we are enabled ſo to do. This makes the Pſalmiſt pray ſo frequently, ſo fervently, that he may have the diſcerning of them, or come to an acquaintance with them. Thoſe therefore by whom they are neglected, do both diſpiſe their Duty, and forſake their own Mercy.

3. That we are not *able of our ſelves* thus to diſcern them without Divine Aid and Aſſiſtance. For the Pſalmiſt who was wiſer than the wiſeſt of us, and who had ſo earneſt a deſire after theſe things, yet

would not truſt unto his own Reaſon, Wiſdom, Ability, and Diligence for the underſtanding of them, but betakes himſelf unto God by Prayer, acknowledging therein that it is *the eſpecial work of God by his Spirit, to enable us to underſtand his Mind and Will as revealed in the Scripture.*

4. There is expreſſed in the words the *Act of God* towards us, whereby he enableth us to behold, diſcern, and underſtand the wonderful effects of Divine Wiſdom, which are treaſured up in the Scripture, which the Pſalmiſt prayeth for. This is called his *opening of our Eyes*, גל עיני: *reveal mine Eyes*, uncover, unvail my eyes. There is a Light in the Word; all Truth is Light; and ſacred Truth is ſacred Light. Yea, the Word of God is expreſly called *Light*, *Pſal.* 36. 9. *Pſal.* 43. 3. *Pſal.* 119. 105. But there is by Nature a *Covering*, a *Veil* on the Eyes of the underſtandings of all Men, that they are not able of themſelves to behold this *Light*, nor to diſcern any thing by it in a due manner. With reſpect hereunto, the Pſalmiſt prays that God would *reveal his eyes. Revelare* is *Velamentum levare*; to reveal is to take off the Veil or Covering. And this Veil is that of our Natural Darkneſs, Blindneſs, and Ignorance

norance; whereof we have treated elſe-where.

I ſee not what is wanting unto the explanation or confirmation of the Poſition before laid down. The Communication of Spiritual Light from God, is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghoſt. He is the immediate Author of all Spiritual Illumination. But hereby alone, or by vertue hereof can we know or underſtand the Mind of God in the Scripture, in ſuch a manner as God requireth us to do; And whoſoever hath received the Grace of this Divine *Illumination*, may do ſo, ſo far as he is concerned in point of Faith or Obedience.

The *Law* is the *Scripture*, the written Word of God. Therein are *Wonderful things* or Myſteries of Divine Wiſdom contained and revealed. To *behold theſe things*, is to diſcern and underſtand them aright, with reſpect unto our own Faith and Obedience. This we cannot do without a *Supernatural Act* of the Spirit of God upon our Minds, enabling them to diſcern them, and underſtand them; Theſe things are in the Text, ἀναπρρήτως. And we hence further argue, That, which is our Duty to pray for *Spiritual Supernatural Aid*, to enable us to do, that of *our ſelves* we are not

able to do, without that Aid and Aſſiſtance; at leaſt we may do it by vertue of that Aid and Aſſiſtance; which includes the Subſtance by juſt conſequences of what is pleaded for. But ſuch *Aid*, it is our duty to pray for, that we may underſtand aright the Revelations of the Mind and Will of God in the Scriptures, the only thing to be proved.

There is but one thing which I can foreſee, that may with any Pretence of Reaſon be objected unto this Teſtimony of the *Pſalmiſt* in particular. And this is that he ſpeaks of the Times and Writings of the *Old Teſtament*. Now it is confeſſed that there was in them a *Darkneſs* and Obſcurity, and ſuch as needed *new Revelations* for the underſtanding of them. But ſince all things are *brought to Light by the Goſpel*, there is no need of any ſpecial Aid or Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit by *Supernatural Illumination* for the underſtanding of them. In anſwer hereunto I ſhall conſider the Diſcourſe of the Apoſtle, wherein he ſtateth this whole matter; 2 *Cor.* 3. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. *And not as* Moſes *who put a vail over his face that the Children of* Iſrael *could not ſtedfaſtly look to the end of that which is aboliſhed. But their Minds were blinded: For*

For until this day remaineth the ſame veil untaken away, in the reading of the Old Teſtament, which is done away in Chriſt. Nevertheleſs, when it ſhall turn unto the Lord, (or they be turned unto the Lord) *the veil ſhall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open face behold as in a Glaſs the glory of the Lord.*

When *Moſes* had received the *Revelation* of the Law from God, *his face ſhone*, Exod. 34. 29. For there were Wonderful things contained in that Revelation with reſpect unto Jeſus Chriſt; He was in them all, and the End of them all. The whole Miniſtry of *Moſes* was but a Teſtimony given unto the things that were *afterwards to be ſpoken* concerning him, as the Apoſtle declares; *Heb.* 3. 5.

On the receipt of this Revelation *his face ſhone*; becauſe there was a Light, a Luſtre, a Glory in the things revealed unto him; and by them reflected on his Miniſtry, which was ſo repreſented. Nevertheleſs, this *Light* did not ſhine immediately into the Hearts and Minds of the People. They did not ſee or diſcern the Glorious and *Wonderful* things that were in the Law. For there was a *double veil* or covering that hindred

dred them. One that was put on *Moſes Face*; another that was on their own *Hearts*. Some dark apprehenſions and glances of Light they had; but they could not *look ſtedfaſtly* unto the end of that which was to be aboliſhed; they could not comprehend the Truth concerning Chriſt, which was the ſubſtance and end of the Law.

The *firſt Veil*, that which was on the face of *Moſes*, was the obſcurity of the inſtructions given them as wrapt up in *Types*, *Shadows*, and *dark Parables*. This they could not ſee through as clearly to diſcern the *wonderful things* contained in and under them. This *Veil* is quite taken off, in the Revelation, or *Doctrine of the Goſpel*, wherein Life and Immortality are brought to light, and the wonderful things of the Myſtery of God in Chriſt are fully declared, and plainly expreſſed. Herein therefore it is acknowledged, that there is a great difference between thoſe under the *Old* Teſtament, and thoſe under the *New*.

But, ſaith the Apoſtle, there is *another Veil*; a *Veil upon the Heart*. And hereof he declareth two things; 1. That this Veil is *done away only in Chriſt*; and (2.) That therefore it is not taken away from any,

ny, but thoſe who are *converted unto God.* This is the *Covering* of Ignorance, Darkneſs, Blindneſs, that is on Men by Nature. The *former Veil* is taken away by the *Doctrine of the Goſpel.* This latter is to be removed only by an *effectual work of the Spirit of Chriſt*, in the converſion of the Souls of Men unto God.

And two things do enſue on the removal of this *double Veil.* 1. That as unto the Doctrine it ſelf concerning the Myſtery of God in Chriſt; it is no more repreſented unto us in *Types*, *Shadows*, and *dark Parables*; but in the clear *Glaſs of the Goſpel*, whereon the glory of Chriſt is reflected. Hereby the *Veil* is taken off from the *Face of Moſes.* 2. That we have προσωπον ανακεκαλλυμενον, an *open uncovered Face*: or, as the *Syriack* reads it, a *revealed Eye*, whereby we are enabled to diſcern the wonderful Myſteries of God ſo revealed. This enſues on the taking away of the *ſecond Veil* of Darkneſs and Blindneſs, which is on the Hearts of all by Nature.

The removal and deſtruction of this *double Veil* by the Spirit and Grace of the Goſpel, is that which is Prophecied of *Iſa.* 25. 7. *And he ſhall deſtroy in this Mountain the Face,* חלט חלוט the *covering, covered,*

vered, or the *double Veil*, *that is on the Face of all People*; and המסכה הנסוכה, *the Veil Veiled over all Nations.*

This being the design of the Discourse of the Apostle; it is evident that although there be a difference between them under the *Old Testament* and us, as to the *Veil* that was on the *Face of Moses*, which is destroyed and removed by the *Doctrine of the Gospel*; yet there is none, as to the *Veil* which is on the *Hearts* of all by Nature, which must be removed by the *Holy Spirit*, or we cannot with *open Face* behold the Glory of the Lord; the thing which the *Psalmist* prayeth for in the place insisted on. That is, that God by his Spirit would more and more renew his mind, and take away his Natural darkness and ignorance, that he might be able to behold, perceive and understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture: And if any shall suppose or say, that for their parts they need no such especial *Aid* and *Assistance* to enable them to understand the mind of God in the Scripture, which is sufficiently exposed to the common Reason of all Mankind; I shall only say at present; I am afraid they do not understand those places of Scripture, where this *Aid* and *Assistance* is so expressly affirmed to be necessary thereunto. But

But the meaning of the Pſalmiſt will the better appear, if we conſider the Communication of the Grace which he prayed for unto others. This is expreſſed, *Luke* 24.45. *Then opened he their underſtandings, that they might underſtand the Scriptures.* A needleſs work if ſome Men may be believed. But our Lord Jeſus Chriſt thought not ſo. The Truths concerning him were revealed in the Scripture, that is of the *Law and the Prophets, and the* Pſalms, v.44. Theſe they read, theſe they were inſtructed in, theſe were Preached unto them every day. And probably they were as well skilled in the *literal Senſe* of Scripture propoſitions, as thoſe who pretend higheſt amongſt us, ſo to be. Howbeit they could not underſtand thoſe wonderful things in a way of duty, and as they ought to do, until the Lord Chriſt *opened their underſtandings.* There was needfull unto them an immediate gracious act of his divine power on their minds to enable them thereunto. And I cannot yet much value thoſe mens underſtanding of the Scripture, whoſe *underſtandings are not opened* by the Spirit of Chriſt.

If we need the *openings of our underſtandings* by an act of the Power and Grace

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of Christ, that we may *understand the Scriptures*, then without it we cannot so do, namely, so as to beleive and yeild obedience according unto our duty; the consequence is evident; for if we could, there is no need of this Act of Christ towards these Disciples, who were not destitute of any *rational Abilities*, required in us thereunto. And the Act of Christ in *opening their understandings*, is openly distinguished from the proposition of the Doctrine of the Scripture unto them. This was made two ways: First, In the *Scripture* it self: Secondly, In the Oral Discourse of our Saviour upon it. Distinct from both these is that Act of his whereby he *opened their understandings*, that they might understand the Scripture. Wherefore nothing but a *real Internal Act of Grace* in the Illumination of their minds can be intended thereby, the Nature whereof shall be further explained afterwards.

But there is an eminent place that must be pleaded distinctly to this purpose. *Ephes.* 1.17,18,19. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understandings being enlightned, that you may know*

know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the Glory of the Inheritance in the Saints, and what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us ward who believe.

This is the whole of what we would Aſſert, and nothing elſe.

And if Men would acquieſs by Faith in what is here declared, we need to plead this Cauſe no farther. For the *words and expreſſions* of the Truth here uſed are more *Emphatical* unto a Spiritual underſtanding, than any we can find out. And I ſhall only ſhew in the opening of them, how our Poſition and Senſe is contained in them. [And 1. What the Apoſtle doth here for others, it is unqueſtionably our duty to do for our ſelves. We are then to Pray, that God *would enable us by his Spirit to know and underſtand his Mind and Will, as Revealed in the Scripture.* This therefore without eſpecial Aid and Aſſiſtance from him by his Spirit, we cannot do. And the *Aid* he gives us conſiſts in the *effectual Illumination* of our Minds, or the enlightning of the Eyes of our Underſtandings. Theſe things are plain and not liable as I ſuppoſe to any exception. And theſe are all we Plead for. Let them be granted without

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any other distinctions or limitations, but what the Scripture will justifie, and there is an end of this difference. But some particular passages in the words may be considered for the better understanding, and farther confirmation of the Truth contained therein.

1. It is a *Revelation* that the Apostle prays for; or *a Spirit of Revelation* to be given unto them. This greatly offends some at first hearing, but wholly without cause. For he understands not new *immediate external Revelation from God.* Believers are not directed to look after such Revelations for their Guide: Ever since the Scripture was written, the generality of the Church was obliged to attend thereunto alone, as their only Rule of Faith and Obedience. And although God reserved unto himself a liberty under the Old Testament, and until the compleating of all the Books of the New, to add *new Revelations* as he pleased; yet he alwaies bound up the Faith and Obedience of the *present Church*, unto what he had already revealed. And he hath now by the Spirit of his Son, put an end unto all expectation of any *new*, of any *other* Revelations, wherein the Faith or Obedience of the Church should be concerned.

leaſt we take it for granted in this Enquiry; that *infallible Inſpirations* in the diſcovery of things not before revealed, are ceaſed in the Church. Nor do the *Papiſts* extend their *Infallibility* thereunto, but only unto things already Revealed in the Scripture or Tradition. What ſome among our ſelves do aſcribe of this nature unto their *Light* I do not well know, nor ſhall now enquire.

But there is an *internal ſubjective Revelation*, whereby no *new things* are Revealed unto our Minds, or are not outwardly Revealed *anew*, but our Minds are enabled to diſcern the things that are Revealed already. All the things here mentioned by the Apoſtle, which he deſires they might *underſtand*, were already Revealed in the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament and the New that were then Written, and the Infallible declaration of the Goſpel in the Preaching of the Apoſtles. But there was a new Work of Revelation required, in, and unto every perſon, that would underſtand and comprehend theſe things in a due manner. For ἀποκάλυψις or *Revelation*, is the *Diſcovery* of any thing, whether by the *propoſal* of it unto us, or the *enabling* of us to diſcern it when it is ſo propoſed. In

the firſt ſenſe it is uſed, *Rom.* 16. 25. 2 *Cor.* 12. 1,7. *Gal.* 1.12. Chap. 2.2. In the latter, *Luke* 2. 32. *Epheſ.* 1. 11. As when God opened the Eyes of the Servant of *Eliſha* on the Prayer of his Maſter, to ſee the *Horſes and Chariots of Fire* that were round about him, 2 *Kings* 1.6,17. They were not brought thither by the opening of his Eyes; only he was enabled to diſcern them which before he could not do. Or as when any one maketh uſe of a *Teleſcope* to behold things afar off, no object is preſented unto him, but what was really in the ſame place before, only his *viſive faculty*, is aſſiſted to diſcern them at that diſtance, which without that aſſiſtance it could not reach unto. And the Holy Spirit is here called the Spirit of Revelation, *cauſally*; as he is the Author or principal efficient cauſe of it: So in his Communication unto the Lord Chriſt himſelf, he is called the *Spirit of Wiſdom and Underſtanding*; *the Spirit of Counſel and Might*; *the Spirit of Knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord*; *that ſhould make him of quick underſtanding in the Fear of the Lord*, Iſa. 11. 2, 3.

2. What the *Pſalmiſt* in the place before inſiſted on calleth in general נִפְלְאוֹת *wonderful* things, the Apoſtle expreſſeth in parti-

particular, and distributes them under sundry heads as they were more clearly revealed in the Gospel. Such are, *the hope of Gods calling*, *the riches of his Glory*, and the *exceeding greatness of his Power* in them that do believe. These are some of the principal and most important mysteries of the Gospel. No other understanding can we have of these things, but only as they are *revealed* therein, or of the Revelation of them. And in the manner of his expression he declares these things to be *wonderful*, as the *Psalmist* speaks. For there is in them πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης, *the riches of Glory*; which is beyond our comprehension. So he expressly affirms, that it is ἀνεξιχνίαστος, *ch.* 3. 8. *past all investigation* or search; the same word that he useth to set forth the ways of God, when his design is to declare them *wonderful*, or the object of our admiration, *Rom.* 11. 33. *O the depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his ways, and his Judgements past finding out*, And there is in them, ὑπερβαλλον μέγεθος an *exceeding* or inexpressible *greatness of Power*.

Such are the things that are proposed unto us in the Scripture. And the principal reason why some Men judge it so easie

a matter to understand and comprehend by *the innate Abilities* of their own minds the Revelations that are made in the word of God unto us; is, because they do not apprehend that there is any thing *wonderful*, or truly great and glorious in them. And therefore because they cannot raise their minds unto a comprehension of these Mysteries as they are in themselves; they corrupt and debase them, to suit them unto their own low carnal apprehensions, which is the principle that works effectually in the whole of *Socinianism*. For grant that there are such *wonderful things*, such Mysteries in the Gospel as we plead, and the Men of that perswasion will not deny, but that our minds do stand in need of an Heavenly Assistance to comprehend them aright. For they deny them for no other reason, but because their reason cannot comprehend them.

3. Concerning these things so revealed in the word; the Apostle prays for these *Ephesians*, that they might *know them*; as also he expresseth the way whereby alone they might be enabled so to do. Εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς; that they might have a sight, perception or understanding of them. This he denies a *Natural Man* to have, or that he

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can have; He *cannot know them*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 14. It is true, it may be ſaid, he cannot know them unleſs they are *clearly* and fairly propoſed unto him; no, nor then neither, by the Light and Power of his own natural Faculties. He cannot do ſo by the uſe of any outward means alone. It is futilous to imagine that the Apoſtle intends only, That a *Natural man* cannot know things that are never propoſed unto him, which is neither weakneſs, nor diſcommendation. For neither can the *Spiritual man* ſo know any thing.

Becauſe it is thus with men by Nature, therefore doth the Apoſtle ſo earneſtly pray, That theſe *Epheſians* might be enabled to *underſtand* and *know theſe* things, and he doth it with an unuſual ſolemnity, invocating the *God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Glory:* which argues both a great intention of Spirit in him, and great weight laid upon the Matter of his requeſt.

But what Reaſon is there for this Earneſtneſs? What is wanting unto theſe *Epheſians*? what would he yet have for them? were they not *rational men* that had their Eyes in their Heads as well as others? nay, were not many of them learned Men and skilled in

all the Curious Arts of thoſe days? for here it was, that ſo many upon their firſt Converſion burnt their Books to the value *of fifty thouſand pieces of Silver*; Act. 19. 19. Probably they were many of them very knowing in the *New and Old Philoſophy*. Had they not the Scripture alſo; that is, all the Books of the Old Teſtament, and thoſe of the New which were then Written? Did not the Apoſtle and others Preach the Doctrine of the Goſpel unto them, and therein the things which he here mentioneth? He declareth, and expreſly teſtifieth that he did, *Act.* 20. 20, 27. Speaking unto theſe very perſons, that is, the Leaders of them; he ſaith, *I have kept back nothing which was profitable unto you, but declared unto you all the counſel of God*; namely, what is the hope of his Calling, and what the riches of his Glory, and what the greatneſs of his Power: were not theſe things ſufficiently revealed, and clearly propoſed unto them? if they were not, it was becauſe the Apoſtle *could not* ſo reveal and propoſe them, or becauſe he *would not*. If he *could not*, then he prays, That that might be revealed unto them which was not ſo to him; or that they might learn what he *could not teach them*, which is fooliſh and impious to imagine. If he *would* not, then

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he prays, That they may know, that which he would not teach them, which he could eaſily have ſo done; which is equally fooliſh to ſuppoſe. What therefore do they yet lack? What is yet further needful, that they might know and underſtand theſe things? For we muſt know, that we underſtand no more of the Mind of God in the Revelations that he makes unto us, than we underſtand of the *things themſelves* that are revealed by him.

I am perſwaded, That theſe *Epheſians* were generally as *wiſe*, and ſome of them as *learned* as any in our days, let them have what conceit of themſelves they pleaſe. Yet grant ſome of ours but thus much, that they have their Wits about them, and the uſe of their Reaſon; and let them have the things of the Goſpel, or the Doctrines of it rationally propoſed unto them, as they are in the Scripture, and they defie the World to think that they yet want any thing to enable them to *know*, and rightly to underſtand them. To fancy any thing elſe to be neceſſary hereunto is *fanatical* madneſs. For what would Men have? what ſhould ayle them? Are not the Doctrines of the Goſpel highly *rational*? are not the things of it eminently ſuited unto the

Reaſon of Mankind? are not the Books of the Scripture written in a Style and Language *intelligible*? Is there any thing more required unto the underſtanding of the Mind of any Author, but to conceive the *Grammatical* ſenſe of the Words that he uſeth, and the nature of his Propoſitions and Arguings? And although St. *Paul*, as ſome ſay, *be one of the obſcureſt Writers they ever met with*; yet ſurely by theſe means ſome good ſhift may be made with his Writings alſo. It is therefore *Canting and non-ſenſe*, a Reproach to Reaſon and Chriſtian Religion it ſelf, to think that this is not enough to enable men to underſtand the Mind of God in the Scriptures.

Well be it ſo at preſent unto the highly *rational Abilities* of ſome perſons; it cannot be denied, but that the Apoſtle judged it neceſſary, that theſe *Epheſians* ſhould have the *ſpecial Aid of the Spirit of God* unto this End, which he prayeth for. And we may be excuſed if we dare not think our ſelves better than they; nor to have a ſufficiency of Learning, Wiſdom, and Reaſon above others, or leſs to need Prayers of this nature then they did. And we find that the Apoſtle reneweth his Prayer for them again unto the ſame purpoſe, with great ferveny,

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Chap. 3. *ver.* 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. All the difference ariſeth from hence, that the Apoſtle judgeth, that over and above the utmoſt exerciſe of our natural Faculties and Abilities in the uſe of outward means that we may know the Mind of God in the Scripture, wherein theſe *Epheſians* were not wanting; it is neceſſary that the *Eyes of our Underſtanding* ſhould be Spiritually opened and enlightned; but other men it ſeems think not ſo.

But yet if men ſhould be allowed to ſuppoſe, that our Minds were no way vitiated, depraved, or darkned by the Fall, which ſuppoſition is the ſole foundation of theſe Aſſertions; yet it is moſt irrational to imagine, that we can comprehend and underſtand *the Myſteries of the Goſpel* without eſpecial *Spiritual Illumination*. For the Original Light and Abilities of our Minds was not ſuited or prepared for the receiving and underſtanding of them. For neither their Being nor Revelation was conſiſtent with the State of Integrity. Wherefore although our Minds ſhould be allowed to be as wiſe and perſpicacious with reſpect unto that natural Knowledge of God and all that belongs unto it, which was propoſed unto us, or neceſſary for us

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in the State of Nature; yet would it not follow, that we are able to diſcern the *Myſteries of Grace* when propoſed unto us. The Truth is, if our Minds be not corrupted or depraved, there is no need of the Goſpel nor its Grace; and if they are, we cannot underſtand the Mind of God therein, without eſpecial Illumination.

But it may be ſaid, That theſe things are conſiſtent. For notwithſtanding mens *rational Abilities*, and the uſe of means; yet it is meet that they ſhould both *pray* for themſelves, and that others whoſe duty it is, ſhould pray for them alſo. It is ſo, That they may be *diligent* in their Enquiries, and obtain the *bleſſing of God upon their diligence*. But this doth not prove at all, that they are *not able of themſelves* to apprehend and know the Mind and Things of God in the Scripture, or that any thing is wanting in them, or to them, which is abſolutely neceſſary thereunto.

I anſwer, That on theſe ſuppoſitions; there is indeed nothing wanting, but that which the Apoſtle moreover prayeth for, which is none of them. And if that be not alſo requiſite unto this end, his Prayer is vain and uſeleſs. That Men be diligent in the diſcharge of their duty herein, and that

that they may have the eſpecial bleſſing of God thereon, are here ſuppoſed, and we ſhall ſpeak unto them afterwards. Theſe are not the things that the Apoſtle here prayeth for; but that God would give them the *Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation to enlighten the eyes of their Underſtandings*, that they may know them as ſhall be immediately declared. And indeed I underſtand not how this Prayer can be ſuited unto the principles of any who deny the neceſſity of this Internal Spiritual Aid.

For they cannot but think it ſtrange to pray for a *Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation* to be given unto their *whole Congregations*, which were a dangerous way to make them wiſer than their Teachers. And for themſelves, uſing diligence, and praying for a bleſſing in their diligence, they diſavow any farther concernment in this matter.

4. The thing in eſpecial prayed for in order unto the end propoſed, is, that the *Eyes of our underſtandings may be eulightned.* This is the ſame which the *Pſalmiſt* prayeth for in the place before inſiſted on, that God *would open his eyes.* And it is the *Internal work of Illumination* that is intended

tended. Now although the main force of the Argument depends on these words, yet shall I not insist here upon them; because I must speak somewhat more in particular unto the nature of this work afterwards. Besides what is that *Darkness* which is here supposed to be on our minds or understandings, what is its Nature, efficacy and power, how it is taken away and removed; what is the Nature of that Spiritual Light which is communicated unto us, in and for the removal thereof, I have at large elsewhere declared. All that at present I shall observe from these words, is in general; that there is an *especial work of the Spirit of God in the enlightning the Eyes of our understandings*, necessary unto our discerning of the Mysteries of the Gospel in a due manner; which was to be proved.

5. What is declared concerning the Authour of this work in us, or the principal efficient cause of it, doth farther confirm the same Truth. And this is the *Holy Spirit*; *That he would give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation.* That the Holy Spirit is the immediate Authour of all Super-natural effects and operations in us, hath been elsewhere proved at large. And what

what he is promiſed or given in the Goſpel ſo to effect, is not any thing that is in our own power. Wherefore the aſcription of the *communication of this Ability* unto the Holy Ghoſt, is a ſufficient evidence that we want it in our ſelves. And all things here affirmed concerning the manner of his communication unto us, and his properties as communicated, do evidence the Nature, and evince the Truth of the Work aſcribed unto him. As for the firſt, it is by the *grant*, *donation*, or *free gift* of God the Father, *ver.* 17. *That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Glory would give unto you.* God is called, the *King of Glory*, *Pſal.* 24.7,8. and the *God of Glory*, *Act.* 7.2. with reſpect unto his own glorious Majeſty. But he is the *Father of Glory*, as he is the Eternal Spring and *cauſe of all Glory unto the Church.* And theſe Titles are prefixed unto this grant or the requeſt of it, *the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, *the Father of Glory*, to intimate that it proceeds from his Relation unto us in *Chriſt*, with that love and bounty wherein he is the cauſe of all Grace and Glory unto us. Wherefore receiving this Spirit by *free donation*, as we do, *Luk.* 11.13. All that we receive from him and by him,

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we have it by the way of *free gift* or donation alſo. Therefore is this Ability of *underſtanding the Scripture*, and the myſteries of the Truth contained therein, a meer *free gift of God*, which he beſtows on whom he will. So our Saviour told his Diſciples, *unto you it is given to know the Myſteries of God*, *but to them* (to others) *it is not given*, *Mat.* 13. 11. who yet heard his words, and underſtood the literal ſenſe of the propoſitions uſed by him as well as the Diſciples did. Whoever therefore hath this Ability to know the Myſteries of the Goſpel, he hath it by *free Gift*, or donation from God. He hath received it, and may not boaſt as if it were from himſelf, and that he had not received it, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 *Cor.* 4. 7. Again, the properties aſcribed unto him, as thus communicated for this End, are *Wiſdom*, and *Revelation.*

1. He is the *Spirit of Wiſdom.* So in the communication of him in all fulneſs unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Head of the Church, he is called the *Spirit of Wiſdom and Underſtanding*, *Iſa.* 11. 2. and that becauſe he was to make him of *quick underſtanding in the fear of the Lord*, *verſ.* 3. He is a *Spirit of Wiſdom* eſſentially

ally in himself; and *causally* or efficiently unto others. And these things do mutually demonstrate each other. That he is the *cause* of all Wisdom in others, is a Demonstration that he is *essentially* wise in himself. *For he that planted the ear shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?* And because he is *essentially wise*, he must be the Author of all Wisdom unto others. For all good must come from that which is Infinitely, Eternally, Unchangeably so, *James* 1. 17. He is therefore called the *Spirit of Wisdom* on both these accounts; as he is *essentially* so in himself, and as he is the *efficient cause* of all Wisdom unto others. And it is in the latter way immediately that he is here so termed. And this Property is peculiarly ascribed unto him as thus given unto us, to *open our eyes*, with respect unto the work which he is to do. For Wisdom is required hereunto. That Wisdom which may deliver us from being really *Fools* our selves, and from judging the things of God to be folly.

There is a wisdom required hereunto: *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things; Prudent, and he shall know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just*

just shall walk in them; *but the Transgressors shall fall therein*; Hos. 14. 9. Want of this Wisdome is the cause that Wicked Men take offence at, and dislike the ways of God, because they do not Spiritually understand them, and so cast themselves into Destruction. And it is of the same things that the Prophet Affirms, That none *of the Wicked shall understand*, *but the Wise shall understand*; Dan. 12. 10. And it is called, The *Wisdome of the Just*; Luk. 1. 17.

This Wisdom is not in us by Nature. Men are naturally wise in their own conceit; which if continued in, is an hopeless frame of Mind, *Prov.* 26. 12. And in nothing doth it more evidence it self, than in Apprehensions of their own Ability to comprehend Spiritual things, and in their contempt of what they do not so; as *folly*, 1 Cor. 1. 18,23. And with respect here. unto, doth the Apostle give that Advice unto us, as our Duty; *Let no man deceive himself*, *if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this World*, *let him become a Fool*, *that he may be Wise*, 1 Cor. 3. 18. This is a matter wherein Men are very apt to deceive themselves; even to conceit themselves Wise, and to trust thereunto in the things of God, whereof alone he there treats

treats. Whereas therefore the eſpecial promiſe of God is to teach the *meek* and the *humble*, there is nothing that ſets men at a greater diſtance from divine Inſtruction, than a proud conceit of their own wiſdom, wit, parts and abilities. Wherefore this wiſdom which is the daugh er of natural darkneſs, and the mother of proud ſpiritual ignorance, the ſpirit of wiſdom freeth the minds of Believers from, in the way that ſhall be afterwards declared; and therein is he unto us a *Spirit of Wiſdom*. Moreover, he gives us that *Wiſdom which is from above*, which we are directed to ask of God, *James* 1.5. Without this Wiſdom which he works in us, no man can underſtand the Wiſdom of God in the myſtery of the Goſpel; whoſo is thus made wiſe, ſhall underſtand theſe things, and none elſe. There is therefore a *Gift of Spiritual Wiſdom* and underſtanding neceſſary hereunto, that we may diſcern the *wonderful things* that are in the Word of God. To whom this is not given, they know not the myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let men pleaſe or pride themſelves whilſt they will in their own wiſdom and learning, and explode the conſideration of theſe things in our enquiries after the mind of God, the meaneſt Believer who hath received this Wiſdom

from above, according unto the meaſure of the Gift of Chriſt, knoweth more of the mind of God in a due manner then they do.

When our Lord Jeſus Chriſt affirmed that he came into the world, *that they which ſee not, might ſee*, or to communicate ſpiritual ſaving light into the minds of men, the *Phariſees* who had great apprehenſions of their own *wiſdom* and underſtanding in the Law, replied with ſcorn, *And are we blind alſo?* *John* 9. 33, 40. I proved no otherwiſe, and that to their eternal ruine, yet do I not judge all them to be *practically* blind, who do not *doctrinally* own the receiving of this Wiſdom and Light from above. For although we make not our ſelves to differ from others, nor have any thing in a way of ſpiritual Ability, but what we have received, yet are ſome apt to *glory* as if they had not received, as the Apoſtle intimates, 1 *Cor.* 4. 7. Wherefore the Holy Spirit as given unto us, is ſaid to be a *Spirit of Wiſdom*, becauſe he *maketh us wiſe* or worketh wiſdom in us. This wiſdom we have not of our ſelves; for to ſuppoſe it, renders the Word of God of none effect. And this ſpiritual wiſdom, thus to be beſtowed upon

upon us, thus to be wrought in us, is neceſſary that we mey know the myſteries of the Goſpel, or underſtand the mind of God therein; which is all that we plead for.

I have inſiſted the longer upon this Teſtimony, becauſe the whole of what we aſſert in general, in the nature, cauſes, and effects of it, is fully declared therein. And this was the way whereby they of old came to underſtand divine Revelations, or the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. If others who ſeem to ſcorn all mention of the *teaching of the Holy Ghoſt*, have found out a courſe more expedite unto the ſame end, it is what I underſtand not, nor do deſire to participate in.

CHAP. III.

Other Teſtimonies pleaded in the Confirmation of the ſame Truth, Joh. 16. 13. *opened. How far all true Believers are infallibly lead into all Truth, declared. And the manner how they are ſo,* 1 John 2. 20, 27. *explained. What Aſſurance of the Truth they have who are taught of God.* Epheſ. 1. 5, 6. John 30. 22. John 6. 45. *Practical Truths inferred from the Aſſertion proved.*

THere are yet other Teſtimonies which may be pleaded unto the ſame purpoſe. For unto this end is the Holy Ghoſt promiſed unto all Believers, *John* 16. 13. *When the Spirit of Truth is come, he ſhall guide you into all Truth.*

The Holy Spirit is called the *Spirit of Truth,* principally on the ſame account as God abſolutely is, called *the God of Truth,* He is ſo *eſſentially.* He is the firſt, abſolute, divine, eternal Verity; ſo he is originally called the Holy Spirit on the account of his *eſſential* Holineſs. But it is not on that

that account ſolely that he is here called the *Spirit of Truth*. He is ſo as he is the *Revealer* of all divine ſupernatural Truth unto the Church. As he is alſo called the Holy Spirit, as he is Author of all Holineſs in others; therefore is he here promiſed unto the Church as it is his work to *lead us into all Truth*.

And two things are conſiderable in this promiſe; (1.) What is intended by *all Truth*. (2.) How the Holy Spirit *guides* or *leads* us into it.

1. With reſpect unto the *Object*, it is not *all Truth abſolutely* that is intended. There is Truth in things natural, civil, and ſtories of things that are paſt; nothing of this nature is comprized in this promiſe. We ſee Believers of all ſorts as ignorant of, as unacquainted with many of theſe things, as any other ſort of men whatever. Yet doth not one word of the promiſe of Chriſt fall unto the ground. Wherefore *all that Truth*, or all Truth of that nature whereof our Saviour there ſpeaketh, is alone intended. The myſteries of the Goſpel, of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Counſel of God about the ſalvation of the Church by Chriſt, and concerning their faith and obedience, are the

Truth which he is promiſed to guide us into. This the Apoſtle calleth, *All the Counſel of God*, *Acts* 20. 27. namely, which reſpects all the Ends of our Faith and Obedience, *ver.* 21.

2. It admits of a *Limitation* with reſpect unto the diverſity of ſubjects, or the perſons unto whom this Truth is to be communicated. They are not all of them as to the *degrees* of light and knowledge *equally* to be lead into all Truth. Every one unto whom he is thus promiſed, ſhall be ſo far lead into the knowledge of it, as is neceſſary unto his own eſtate and condition, his duty and his work. For unto *every one of us is given grace according unto the meaſure of the gift of Chriſt*, *Epheſ.* 4. 7. It is Chriſt alone, who in the free gift of all grace, *aſſigns the meaſures* wherein every one ſhall be made partaker of it. In his Soveraign Will he hath allotted the meaſures of grace, light and knowledge unto all the members of the Church. And there is no leſs difference in *theſe meaſures*, then in the knowledge of the moſt glorious Apoſtle, and that of the meaneſt Believer in the World. The duty, work and obedience of every one, is the *Rule of the meaſure* of his receiving theſe gifts of Chriſt.

Christ. None shall want any thing that is necessary unto him; none shall receive any thing that he is not to use and improve in a way of duty.

2. Our second Enquiry is, how the Spirit doth thus *lead us* into all Truth. The external Revelation of Truth is herein supposed. This he is promised to instruct us in the knowledge of, in a spiritual manner, whereby I understand no more, but so as it is required of us in a way of duty. To clear the Truth hereof, some things must be observed. As,

1. The promises concerning the *mission of the Holy Spirit* in these *Chapters of the Gospel*, 14, 15, 16. are not to be confined unto the *Apostles*, nor unto the *first Age or Ages of the Church*. To do so is expresly contradictory unto the Discourse and whole design of our Lord Jesus Christ unto that purpose. For he promiseth him in opposition unto his own temporary abode in the world; namely, that this of the Spirit should *be for ever*, *Chap.* 14, 16. that is ἕως τ συντελειας τ αἰῶνος, *Mat.* 28. 20. unto the *consummation* of the whole State of the Church here below. And to suppose the contrary, is to overthrow the foundation of all Truth and Comfort in the Church. For their preservation in the one, and the

adminiſtration of the other unto them, depend on the accompliſhment of this promiſe alone. And ſo alſo do all the benefits of the Interceſſion of Chriſt, which are no otherwiſe communicated unto us, but by the *Holy Spirit*, as given in purſuit of this promiſe. For what herein he prayed for his Apoſtles, he prayed *for all them that ſhould believe in him through this word unto the end of the world*, Joh. 17.

2. It is granted, that ſundry things in the promiſes of the Holy Ghoſt were *peculiar* unto the Apoſtles, and had their accompliſhment on the day of *Pentecoſt*, when he deſcended on them in that glorious viſible manner, *Act.* 2. 1, 2, 3, 4. For as they were commanded by our Saviour *to wait for this his coming* before they ingaged in the diſcharge of that Office whereunto he had called them, *Acts* 1. 4. So now they were fully enpowered and enabled unto all that belonged thereunto. But their peculiar intereſt in theſe promiſes, reſpected only things that were peculiar unto their Office; ſuch as that mentioned in this place is not.

3. It is not an *External Guidance* into the Truth by the objective Revelation of it, that is intended; For ſuch Revelations are not granted unto all Believers unto whom

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this promiſe is made, nor are they to look for them. And the Revelation of Truth in the Miniſterial propoſal of it, is common unto all the world unto whom the Word is preached, and ſo is not the ſubject of an eſpecial promiſe.

4. Wherefore it is the *internal teaching* of the Holy Ghoſt giving an underſtanding of the mind of God, of all ſacred Truths as revealed, that is intended. For, (1.) It is the ſame with that other promiſe, we *ſhall be all taught of God.* For we are thus taught of God by the *Spirit's leading us into all Truth*, and no otherwiſe. (2.) This the Word enforceth; The Spirit of Truth, ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς, ſhall *lead and guide you in the right way* to the knowledge of the Truth. So when *Philip* asked the *Eunuch* whether he underſtood the things which he read out of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, he replieth, *How can I?* ἐὰν μὴ τις ὁδηγήσῃ με, *Acts* 8. 31. *unleſs one lead me* to the ſenſe of it; that is by his interpretation give me an underſtanding of it. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all Truth by giving us that underſtanding of it, which of our ſelves we are not able to attain. And other Interpretations the words will not admit. It is therefore his work to give us

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an uſeful ſaving underſtanding of all ſacred Truth, or the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. All ſpiritual *Divine ſupernatural Truth* is revealed in the Scripture. Herein all are agreed. The Knowledge, the *right underſtanding* of this Truth as ſo revealed, is the duty of all, according unto the means which they enjoy, and the duties that are required of them. Neither can this be denied. Unto this end that they may do ſo, the Holy Spirit is here *promiſed unto them that do believe.* His Divine Aid and Aſſiſtance is therefore neceſſary hereunto. And this we are to *pray for*, as it is promiſed. Wherefore of our ſelves, without his eſpecial Aſſiſtance and Guidance, we cannot attain a due knowledge of, and underſtanding in the Truth revealed in the Scripture As unto the eſpecial nature of this Aſſiſtance it ſhall be ſpoken unto afterwards.

This is again affirmed concerning all Believers, 1 *John* 2. 20, 27. *You have an Unction from the Holy One, and you know all things; the anointing which you have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the ſame anointing teacheth you of all things, and is Truth, and is no lye; and even as it hath taught*

taught you, ye ſhall abide in it.

That by the *Unction* and Anointing in in this place the Spirit of God and his work, with reſpect unto the end mentioned, are intended, is not queſtioned by any that are converſant about theſe things with ſobriety. And it is plain in the Text. For (1.) That the Holy Spirit in his eſpecial operations, is called an *Unction*, or is ſaid to *anoint* us, is evident in many places of the Scripture. See *Heb.* 1. 9. 2 *Cor.* 1. 22, 23. Neither is a ſpiritual Unction aſcribed unto any thing elſe in the whole Scripture. (2.) That expreſſion *which you have from the Holy One* (*Acts* 3. 14. *Rev.* 3. 7.) that is *Jeſus Chriſt*, doth expreſly anſwer unto the promiſe of Chriſt, to ſend his Holy Spirit unto us, and that for the end here mentioned, namely, to teach us, and lead us into all Truth; whence he is called *the Spirit of the Lord* or of Chriſt, 2 *Cor.* 3. 17, 18. *Epheſ.* 3. 16. *Phil.* 1. 19, &c. That alſo of his *abiding in us*, is nothing but an expreſſion of the ſame promiſe of Chriſt, that he ſhall *abide with us for ever*, *John* 14. 16. (4.) The work here aſſigned unto this *Unction*, is expreſly aſſigned unto the Holy Spirit, *John* 16. 13. The *Spirit of Truth ſhall guide you into all Truth.* (5.) What

(5.) What is ſaid of it, namely, not only that *it is true, and not falſe*, but that it is *Truth, and no lye*, doth plainly intimate his *eſſential* verity. And I cannot but wonder that any perſons ſhould againſt this open and plain Evidence, aſcribe the things here mentioned unto any thing elſe, and that excluſively unto the Holy Ghoſt. For ſo do ſome contend (*Epiſcop. in loc.* after *Socin.* on the ſame place) that by this Unction the *Doctrine of the Goſpel only* is intended. It is true that the Doctrine of the Goſpel in the preaching of it, is the means or inſtrumental cauſe of this teaching by the Holy Ghoſt. And on that account what is ſpoken of the Teaching of the Spirit of God, may be ſpoken in its place of the Doctrine of the Goſpel, becauſe he teacheth us thereby. But here it is ſpoken of *objectively*, as what we are to be taught, and not *efficiently*, as what it is that teacheth us. And to ſay as they do, it is the inſtruction which we have by the Goſpel that is intended, is to aſſert the *Effect* only, and to *exclude* the Cauſe. For that ſignifies no more, but the effect of the Unction here aſcribed unto Believers, as that which they had received from the Holy One. *Dydimus*, an antient learned Writer,

Writer, interpreteth this *Unction* to be the *Illuminating Grace* of the Spirit, and the *Holy One* to be the *Spirit himself*, *lib.* 2. *de Spir. Sanct.* But the other Interpretation is more proper and conſonant unto the uſe of the Scripture. The expreſſion is taken from the Inſtitution of God under the Old Teſtament, whereby Kings and Prieſts are *anointed* with Oil, to ſignifie the gifts of the Spirit communicated unto them for the diſcharge of their Office. And thence Believers who are real partakers of the internal *Unction* in the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, are ſaid to be *made Kings and Prieſts unto God.* It is therefore the Work of the Holy Spirit that is here deſcribed. He alone with his Gifts, Graces, and Priviledges that enſue thereon, are ſo expreſſed, here or any where elſe in the whole Scripture.

2. Two things are to be obſerved in what is here aſcribed unto this Unction. *Firſt*, What is the *Effect* of his Work in Believers. *Secondly*, What is the *nature* of it, or how he produceth that Effect.

For the Firſt, there is a double Expreſſion of it; (1.) *That they know all things.* (2.) That they *need not that any ſhould teach them*; both which expreſſions admit of, yea

yea require their Limitations.

1. The *all things* intended come under a double reſtriction: the firſt taken from the *nature* of the things themſelves; the other from the *Scope* and circumſtances of the place: or, the one from the general End, the other from the ſpecial deſign propoſed.

1. The *General End* propoſed, is our *abiding in Chriſt.* So *ye ſhall abide in him*; which the Apoſtle expreſſeth, *verſe* 24. by *continuing in the Son, and in the Father.* Wherefore, the *all things* here mentioned, are all things neceſſary unto our ingrafting into and continuance in Chriſt. Such are all the Fundamental, yea, important truths of the Goſpel. Whatever is needful unto our Communion with Chriſt, and our Obedience to him, this all true Believers are taught; However, they may miſtake in things of *leſſer moment*, and be ignorant in the Doctrine of ſome Truths, or have but mean degrees of knowledge in any thing, yet ſhall they all know the Mind and Will of God as revealed in the Scripture, in all thoſe things and Truths which are neceſſary, that they may believe unto Righteouſneſs, and make Confeſſion unto Salvation.

2. The

2. The *especial End*, under consideration is Preservation and Deliverance from the *Antichrists*, and Seducers of those dayes, with the Errors, Lyes, and false Doctrines which they divulged, concerning Christ and the Gospel. The only way and means whereby we may be so preserved from the Poysons and Infections of such pernicious Opinions and ways, is the assured knowledge of the Truths of the Gospel, as they are revealed in the Scripture. All those Truths which were any way needful to secure their Faith, and preserve them from *mortal* seductions, they were taught and did know. And where any man knows the Truths which are required unto his Implantation into Christ, and his continuance with him in Faith and Obedience; as also, all those which may preserve him from the danger of seduction into pernicious Errors; however he may fail and be mistaken in some things of less importance; yet is he secured as unto his present acceptable Obedience, and future Blessedness. And to speak of it by the way, this giveth us the *Rule of our especial communion and love*. Where any are *taught* these things, where they have the knowledge, and make Confession of that Truth,

Truth, or those Articles of Faith whereby they may *abide in Christ*, and are preserved *from pernicious seductions*, although they may differ from us and the Truth in some things of less moment; we are obliged not only to forbearance of them, but *communion* with them: For who shall refuse them, whom Christ hath received? or doth Christ refuse any to whom he gives his Spirit, who have the *Unction* from the Holy One? This, and no other is the Rule of our *Evangelical Love* and Communion among our selves. Whatever we require more of any as a necessary condition of our Christian Society in point of Doctrine, is an unwarrantable *imposition* on their consciences or practice, or both.

2*ly*. It is said, that they so know these things, as that they *need not that any should teach them*; which also requireth a Limitation or Exposition. For,

1. It is only the things as before declared that respect is had unto. Now besides these, there are many other things which Believers stand in need to be taught continually; and whose knowledge belongs unto their *Edification*. Many things are very *useful* unto us, that are not absolutely *necessary*. In natural things, and such as belong

belong unto this preſent Life: Men would be very unwilling to be without, or part with ſundry things without which, yet Life might be preſerved, becauſe they value them, as of uſe unto themſelves, ſo enabling them to be uſeful unto others. And they who underſtand the Nature, Uſe, and Benefit of *Evangelical Truths*, will not be contented that their knowledge in them ſhould be confined only unto thoſe which are of *abſolute neceſſity* unto the Being of Spiritual Life. Yea, they cannot be well ſuppoſed to know thoſe Truths themſelves, who pretend ſuch a ſatisfaction in them as to look no farther. For all who are ſincere in Faith and Knowledge, do aime at that *perfect man in Chriſt*, which all the Ordinances of God are deſigned to bring us unto, *Epheſ.* 4. 13. Wherefore, notwithſtanding the knowledg of theſe things, there is ſtill uſe and need of further Miniſterial Teaching in the Church.

2. It is ſpoken of the things themſelves *abſolutely*, and not with reſpect unto the *degrees* of the knowledge of them. They did ſo know them, as there was no need that any man ſhould teach them unto them, as unto their *initial Knowledge* and ſubſtance of the things themſelves; and ſo it may be

ſaid of all Believers. But yet there are *degrees of knowledge* with reſpect unto thoſe very things, which they may and ought to be carried on unto, as the Apoſtle ſpeaketh, *Heb.* 6. 1. And therefore doth the Holy Apoſtle himſelf, who writes theſe things, *farther inſtruct* them in them. And herein conſiſts the principal part of the Miniſtery of the Church, even to carry on Believers unto Perfection, in thoſe things wherein for the Subſtance of them, they have been already inſtructed.

3. That which is principally intended, is that they need not that any ſhould teach them, ſo as that they ſhould depend on the Light and *Authority* of their Inſtruction. Others may be helpers of their joy, but none can be Lords of their Faith. You need no ſuch teaching becauſe of the *Unction* which you have received.

2*ly*. For the general nature of the Work here aſcribed unto this *Unction*, that is the Holy Spirit, it is *Teaching*; *The Unction teacheth you.* There are but two ways whereby the Spirit teacheth us; nor can any other be conceived. The one is by *Objective*, the other by *Subjective* Revelations. For he teacheth us as a Spirit of *Wiſdom and Revelation.* The firſt way of his Teaching is, by immediate Inſpiration, com-

communicating new Sacred Truths from God immediately unto the Minds of Men. So he taught the *Prophets* and *Apoſtles* and all the Penmen of the Scripture. By him the Word of the Lord came unto them, and they ſpake as they were *acted* by him, 1 *Pet.* 1. 11, 12. 2 *Pet.* 1. 21 This is not the way of Teaching here intended. For, the End of this Teaching of the Holy Ghoſt is only to make Men Teachers of others, which is not here intended. Nor doth the Apoſtle diſcourſe unto any ſuch purpoſe; as though God would grant *new Revelations* unto Men, to preſerve them from Errors and Seductions, which he hath made ſufficient proviſion for in the Word, *Iſa.* 8. 20. 2 *Pet.* 1 19. By this Word were they to try all Doctrines and pretended Revelations, yea they which were ſo really before they received them, 1 *Joh.* 4. 1. Beſides what is here affirmed, is aſcribed unto all ſorts of Believers, under the diſtribution which they are caſt into by the Apoſtle, namely, of *Old-Men*, *Young-Men*, and *Babes* which had not all of them received the Spirit of Immediate Revelation.

His other way of Teaching is, that which we have inſiſted on; namely, his enabling us to diſcern, know, and underſtand the

Mind and Will of God, as Revealed in the Scripture, or as declared in any Divine Revelation; This alone is, or can be here intended. Wherefore this is the Design of the Apostle, in these words; *All divine Truths necessary to be known, and to be believed, that we may live unto God in Faith and Obedience or come unto, and abide in Christ; as also, be preserved from Seducers, are contained in the Scripture, or proposed unto us in divine Revelations. These of our selves we cannot understand, unto the Ends mentioned; for if we could, there would be no need that we should be taught them by the Holy Spirit. But this is so, he teacheth us all these things, enabling us to discern, comprehend, and acknowledge them.* And this is the whole of what we plead for.

For a close of our considerations on these words of the Apostle, I shall only observe what *Assurance* a man that is thus taught the Truth, may have, that it is the Truth which he is taught, and that he is not deceived in his apprehensions of it. For hereon depends the use of this Instruction; especially in times of trial, indeed at all times and on all occasions. It is not enough that we know the Truth, but we must be assured, that so we do. See *Ephes.* 4. 14. *Col.*

Col. 2. 2. And there was never a greater *Artifice* in the World, then that whereby the *Roman Church* hath impoſed an impregnable obſtinate credulity on all that adhere thereunto. For it doth firſt fix this in their Minds, that it ſelf *cannot Erre*, and therefore whatever is by her Authority propoſed unto them, is infallibly true. Hence it comes to paſs that they will abide obſtinate againſt all convictions, and the higheſt Evidence of Truth in all particular inſtances, whilſt this principle is firmly fixed in their minds, that the Church which propoſeth theſe things unto them *cannot Erre*, nor be miſtaken. Yea, whilſt this perſwaſion abides with them, they may be, and indeed accordingly are, obliged to believe Contradictions; things moſt irrational and abſurd, inconſiſtent with Chriſtian Piety, and the peace of Humane Society. However, they ſay well in this, that it is neceſſary that a man ſhould have *good aſſurance* of the Truth which he doth profeſs, or of his own underſtanding of it, and conception about it. This the Apoſtle calleth, the *Riches of the full aſſurance of Underſtanding*, Col. 2. 2. whereof we ſhall ſpeak afterwards.

Wherefore, whereas the Aſſurance of

Mind, in other Teachings depend much on the *Authority* of them by whom they are taught; on a ſuppoſition that Believers are taught the Mind of God in the Scripture by the Holy Spirit, or are by him enabled to diſcern and know it; the enquiry is, how, or by what means they have an *Aſſurance* that they have a *right underſtanding* of the things which they are ſo taught, ſo as to abide in them, and the profeſſion of them, againſt all oppoſition whatever; and ſo as to venture the Eternal condition of their Souls on *that Aſſurance* they have of the Truth; which every one muſt do, whether he will or no. And this in the Text is referred unto the Author of this Teaching. *For the anointing is Truth, and is no Lye*; it is true and infallibly ſo. There is no fear of, no poſſibility for any man to be deceived in what he is taught by this *Unction*. And an aſſurance hereof ariſeth in our Minds, partly from the *manner* of his Teachings, and partly from the *evidence* of the things themſelves that we are taught. The manner and way of his teaching us in and by the Scripture, evidenceth unto us, that what we are taught is *true*, and *no lye*. He giveth a *ſecret Witneſs* unto what he teacheth in his Teachings.

For

For it is the Spirit that beareth witneſs, becauſe the Spirit is Truth, 1 *Joh.* 5. 6. And with reſpect unto the Evidence which is ſo given us of the Truth, it is ſaid, That the *Unction* whereby we are taught *is Truth, and no Lye*; that is, it is impoſſible any one ſhould be deceived who is ſo taught. This will more fully appear when we have declared the whole of his work herein; ſomething only may now be ſpoken on occaſion of this Teſtimony.

There is a peculiar power accompanying the Teaching of God by his Spirit. *Behold, God exalteth by his power, who teacheth like him?* Job 36. 22. So our Saviour expoundeth that Promiſe, *They ſhall be all taught of God; every man*, ſaith he, *therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me*, Joh. 6. 45. There is ſuch an Efficacy accompanying of Gods Teaching, that whoſoever is ſo taught, doth certainly believe the things that he is taught, as having the Evidence of the Truth of them in himſelf.

When the Holy Ghoſt gave *new Revelations* of Old unto the Prophets and Penmen of the Scripture by *immediate Inſpiration*, he did therein and therewith communicate unto them an infallible Evidence

that they were from God. And when he doth *illuminate our Minds* in the knowledg of what is revealed, he doth therein himſelf bear witneſs unto, and aſſure us of the Truth which we do underſtand. Hereby do we come to that which the Apoſtle calleth the *full aſſurance of Underſtanding in the acknowledgement of the Myſtery of God.* He not only enableth our minds to apprehend the Truth, but *he ſhines into our hearts*, the ſeat of Spiritual Experience, to give us the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* And the Aſſurance which Believers have thereby, is above that which any other Evidence or Demonſtration whatever can give. And the meaneſt Believer hath from this Teaching, a greater reſt, ſatisfaction, and aſſurance in the knowledge of the Mind of God, than any can be attained by the moſt raiſed Notions, or profound Diſputations; *for he that believeth, hath the witneſs in himſelf*; 1 John 5. 10. And why ſhould others think it ſtrange, that there ſhould be that Evidence of Truth in the Teachings of the Spirit, by the Illumination of our Minds in the knowledge of the Scripture, as to give us an aſſurance of the higheſt Nature, *ſeeing there is none that teacheth like him?*

Want

Want hereof, is that which makes Men to fluctuate in their conceptions of Spiritual things, and ſo ready on every occaſion to part with what they have received. The Church of *Rome* hath, as we obſerved, rather *craftily*, then *wiſely* provided againſt any inconvenience herein. The Doctrines which it teacheth are many of them falſe; and ſo the things contained in them can give no Evidence unto themſelves in the minds of Men. For there is nothing but *imagination* in Error, there is nothing of Subſtance in it. And their *way of Teaching* is not accompanied with any eſpecial advantage; yea it is the moſt vain that ever was in the World. They would have men ſuppoſe that they may advance at once in the true belief of an *hundred things* whereof they have no Evidence, meerly reſting on the Infallibility of the Church, by which, they ſay, They are *propoſed*. Wherefore, they teach Men that although they receive no Evidencing Light, in this way of their inſtruction, nor have any experience of the Power or Efficacy of Truth in what they are taught, yet they may reſt aſſuredly in the *Infallibility of the Church*. Hence the Aſſurance they have of any thing they ſuppoſe Truth, is not an act of the Mind

Mind in the embracing of the Truth, from any Evidence that it gives of it ſelf, but a preſumption in general that the *Church is Infallible*, by which theſe things are propoſed unto them. The Deſign is to prevail with Men, to ſuppoſe that they believe *all things*, when indeed they believe *nothing*: that they underſtand the Mind and Will of God, when indeed they underſtand nothing at all of them. For a man believes nothing but what is accompanied with an Evidence whereon it ought to be believed. But this they pretend not unto, at leaſt, not ſuch that ſhould give them that aſſurance of the Truth of it, which is requiſite; and therefore are all men by them referred for that, unto the *Infallibility* of the Church. Perſons weak, ignorant, credulous, or ſuperſtitious, either for Intereſt, or by the craft of Seducers, may be prevailed on to make their reſort unto this Relief; thoſe who will not ~~rationally~~ forego the conduct of their own Souls, and leave themſelves unto the Guidance of, others knowing that it is they alone, who muſt give an account of themſelves, to God; will not eaſily be induced thereunto.

Others, will reſolve all into their own *rational conceptions* of things, without any reſpect

reſpect unto a Superiour Infallible Teacher. And the minds of many influenced by this Notion, That *they have themſelves alone to truſt unto*, are come unto the utmoſt uncertainty and Infallibility in all things of Religion; nor can it otherwiſe be. For the mind of Man is in it ſelf as indifferent and undetermined unto any thing, as true, or falſe, (unleſs it be in its firſt Notions of the common principles of Reaſon) beyond the Evidence that is propoſed unto it: ſo alſo is it *various*, *unſteady*, and apt to fluctuate from one thing to another. And there are but two ways whereby it may be naturally aſcertained, and determined in its conceptions and aſſent. The firſt is by the uſe of the *External ſenſes*, which will not deceive it; however it cannot but receive, believe, and comply with what it comprehends by its *Senſes*; as what it ſees, hears, and feels. The other is by *Reaſon*, whereby it deduceth certain Concluſions, from propoſitions of neceſſary Truth; that is, by *Demonſtration*. But by neither of theſe ways can the Mind be brought unto a ſtability and *Aſſurance* in or about things Spiritual or Supernatural. For they are neither the Objects of *Natural* ſenſe, nor capable of a *Scientifical* Demonſtration.

Wherefore

Wherefore a man can have nothing but a probability or conjectural knowledge concerning them, unleſs he have ſome certain *Infallible Teaching* wherein he can acquieſce. And ſuch is that of this *Unction*, which is *Truth* and *no Lye*. In and by his Teaching of us, namely, the Mind of God as revealed in the Scripture, there is that evidence of Truth communicated unto our minds and hearts, as giveth us an immovable aſſurance of them, or the *full aſſurance of underſtanding*. For God therein ſhines into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his Glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.

Again, there is an evidence in the things themſelves, unto *ſpiritual ſenſe and judgement*, *Phil.* 1. 9. *Heb.* 5. laſt. This is that which gives the mind the higeſt aſſurance of the Truth of what it doth believe, that it is capable of in this World. For when it *finds in it ſelf* the power and efficacy of the Truth wherein it is inſtructed, that it worketh, effecteth, and implanteth the things themſelves upon it, giving and aſcertaining unto it all the benefits and comforts which they promiſe or expreſs, and is thereby united unto the ſoul, or hath a real, permanent, efficacious ſubſiſtence in it;

it; then, I ſay, hath the mind the utmoſt aſſurance in the Truth of it, which it doth or can deſire in the things of this nature. but this belongs not unto our preſent deſign.

The Teſtimonies pleaded are ſufficient for the confirmation of our firſt general Aſſertion, namely, *That it is the Holy Spirit who teacheth us to underſtand aright the Mind and Will of God in the Scripture, without whoſe aid and aſſiſtance we can never do ſo uſefully nor profitably unto our own ſouls.* Sundry others that ſpeak unto the ſame purpoſe will be afterwards on various occaſions inſiſted on.

I might add unto theſe Teſtimonies, the Faith and Profeſſion of the Church in all Ages. They all believed and profeſſed, that the Scriptures could not be underſtood and interpreted without his aſſiſtance and inſpiration by whom they were indited. But it is not neceſſary ſo to do. For thoſe who profeſs a *Truſt* unto their own reaſon and underſtanding only, cannot be ſo ignorant as not to know that they have no countenance given unto their perſwaſion in *Antiquity*, unleſs it were by the *Pelagians*. But whereas there is no profitable handling of ſacred Truths on any pre-

pretence, but with an Eye unto the Guidance of Christian Practice; and when that is manifest, it gives a great confirmation in our minds unto the Truth it self. I shall before I proceed unto the consideration of the *especial ways* of the *Teaching of the Holy Spirit* in this matter, and the *especial duties* required of us in compliance with them, that they may be Effectual, divert a little unto some such considerations of that nature, as derive from this general Assertion.

It is the great Promise of the New Testament, That all Believers shall be διδακτοι τῦ Θεῦ, *taught of God*; which our Saviour himself pleads, as the only Ground of their Believing, *Joh.* 6. 45. And so the Apostle tells the *Thessalonians*, that they were θεοδιδακτοι, 1 *Thess.* 4. 9. *Taught of God.* No Man is αὐτοδιδακτος taught of himself, his own Teacher and Guide in Sacred things. Neither can any man have a worse Master, if he trust thereunto alone. The diligent use of all outward means appointed of God unto this End, that through the Knowledge of the Scripture we may be made Wise unto Salvation; we always suppose. Amongst them the *Ministry of the Church* hath the first and chiefest place,

Ephes.

Epheſ. 4. 12, 13, 14, 15. For they are with me of no account, who think it not worth the utmoſt of their diligence to attain the knowledge of thoſe *wonderful things* that are in the Word. Yea I ſhould greatly admire at their ſtupidity, who will not give ſo much *credit unto the Scripture* teſtifying of it ſelf, and the ſuffrage of all good men with it, that there are *wonderful things* contained in it, ſo far as to enquire with their utmoſt diligence, whether it be ſo or no, but that I know the Reaſons and Cauſes of it. But *a Supream Teacher* there muſt be, on whoſe Wiſdome, Power, and Authority we ought principally to depend, as unto this End, of being Taught of God. And hereunto the uſe of our own Reaſon, the utmoſt improvement of the rational Abilities of our minds, is required. Thoſe who would take away the *uſe of our Reaſon* in Spiritual things, would deal with us as we ſaid before, as the *Philiſtines* did with *Sampſon*; firſt put out our Eyes, and then make us grinde in their Mill. The Scripture we own as the only Rule of our Faith, as the only Treaſury of all Sacred Truths. The Knowledge we aim at, is the *full aſſurance of Underſtanding* in the Mind and Will of God revealed therein.

The

The ſole Enquiry is, whether this ſupream Teacher be the Spirit of God inſtructing us in and by the Scripture, or whether it be the Authority of this or that, any, or all of the Churches in the world, which either are ſo, or pretend to be ſo. Which of theſe will it be our wiſdom to chuſe and adhere unto? That the Holy Spirit hath taken this work upon himſelf, we have already proved, and ſhall afterwards farther demonſtrate. Some Churches, eſpecially that of *Rome*, aſſume this Office unto themſelves. But it is too well known to the moſt to be truſted herein. And a great prejudice there lieth in this cauſe againſt that Church at firſt. The Holy Spirit leaves unto us, yea requires of us the *diligent* uſe of the Scripture, and exerciſe of our own reaſon in ſubſerviency unto his Teaching. But this Church requires us to renounce them *both*, in compliance with her ſelf. And can it ſtand in competition with him? He is infallible, the *Unction* is Truth, and it is no lye; the Spirit is Truth. This alſo indeed that *Church pretends* unto; but with ſuch an open affront unto all evidence of Truth, as the world never underwent from any of its people before. He is abſolutely, infinitely, eternally

eternally *free from any design*, but the Glory of God, the present and eternal Good of them that are instructed by him. It will be very difficult for those of *Rome* to pretend hereunto. Yea, it is apparent, that all the Exercise of their *instructing Authority* lyeth in a subserviency unto their own Interest. When I see that men by a pretence hereof, have gotten unto themselves *Wealth*, *Power*, *Principalities*, *Dominions*, with great Revenues, and do use them all unto their own advantage, and mostly to the satisfaction of their Lusts, Pleasures, Pride, Ambition, and the like inordinate Affections, I confess I cannot be free to deliver up blindfold the conduct of my Soul unto them. He is full of *divine Love* and care of the Souls of them whom he doth instruct; is it so with them, or can any Creature participate in his Love and care? He is infinitely Wise, and *knoweth all things*, *yea the deep things of God*, and can make known what he pleaseth of them unto us: as the Apostle discourseth, 1 *Cor.* 2. They who preside in that Church are ignorant themselves as all men are, and the less they know it, the more ignorant they are; yea, for the most part as unto *sacred things* they are comparatively so, with re-

ſpect unto other ordinary men. As a late *Pope*, when ſome of their Divines waited for an Infallible determination of a *Theological Controverſie* among them, confeſſed, That *he had not ſtudied thoſe things, nor had the knowledge of them been his Profeſſion.*

But yet notwithſtanding, theſe and ſeveral other differences between theſe *Teachers*; it is marvellous to conſider how many betake themſelves unto the *latter of them*, and how few unto the *former*. And the Reaſon is, becauſe of the different *methods* they take in Teaching, and the different *qualifications* they require in them that are to be Taught. For as unto them whom the Spirit of God undertaketh to inſtruct, he requireth that they be *meek* and *humble*, that they give themſelves unto *continual prayer*, *meditation*, and ſtudy in the Word *day and night*; above all that they endeavour a conformity in their whole Souls and Lives unto the Truths that he inſtructs them in. Theſe are hard conditions unto *fleſh and blood*; few there are who like them, and therefore few they are who apply themſelves unto the *School of God*. We may be admitted *Schollers* by the other *Teacher* on far cheaper and eaſier rates. Men may be made good *Catholicks* as to Faith and Underſtanding

ſtanding, without the leaſt coſt in *ſelf-denial*, or much trouble unto the Fleſh in any other duty. There is no qualification required for the admiſſion of a Man into the *Catholick Schools*, and barely to be there, is to be wiſe and knowing enough. Wherefore although all advantages imaginable as unto the *Teachers* lye on the one hand, yet the pretended eaſie way of learning caſts the multitude on the other. For it requireth more Wiſdom then we have of our ſelves, to be at all that charge and paines in ſpiritual duty, and diligence in the uſe of all means for the right underſtanding of the Mind of God, which is required in and of all them, who will advantagiouſly partake of the Teachings of the Holy Spirit; when it is ſuppoſed we may have all the Ends which we aime at thereby, in an eaſie and naked aſſent unto the propoſals of the Church, without the leaſt farther charge or trouble. But theſe are the Meaſures of *ſlothful and carnal Minds*, who prefer their Eaſe, their Luſts and Pleaſures before their Souls. There is difficulty in all things that are excellent. Neither can we partake of the excellency of any thing unleſs we will undertake its difficulty. But although the ways whereby we may come

unto a participation of the Teaching of the Holy Ghoſt, ſeem at firſt rough and uneaſie, yet unto all that ingage in them, they will be found to be, *ways of pleaſantneſs and paths of Peace.*

It may be ſaid, That it is evident in common Experience, that many men do attain a great knowledge and skill in the things revealed in the Scripture, without any of that Internal Teaching by the *Illumination* of their Minds, which is pleaded for; Eſpecially if it be to be obtained by the means now intimated, and afterwards more fully to be declared. For they themſelves do renounce the neceſſity of any ſuch Teaching, and eſteem all that is ſpoken of it a vain imagination; and not only ſo, but live ſome of them in an open defiance of all thoſe qualifications and duties which are required unto a participation of theſe Teachings. Yet it is fooliſh to pretend they are not skilled in the knowledge of *Divinity*, ſeeing it is plain that they excel moſt other men therein; and therefore do ſufficiently deſpiſe all them who pretend unto any benefit by the *Supernatural Illumination* contended for.

I anſwer briefly in this place; It is true there are, and ever were, ſome, yea many

ny who *profeſs that they know God, but in Works deny him being abominable and diſobedient.* The Knowledge which ſuch men may attain, and which they make Profeſſion of, belongs not unto our enquiry; And we may eaſily diſcern both what it is in its ſelf, and wherein it differs from that true knowledge of God, which it is our duty to have. For,

1. There is in the Scripture with reſpect unto the Mind and Will of God revealed therein, with the Myſteries of Truth and Grace, mention of γνῶσις and ἐπίγνωσις; *knowledge* and *acknowledgment.* The former if it be alone, affects only the *ſpeculative part* of the Mind with notions of Truth. And it is of very little uſe, but ſubject unto the higheſt abuſe; 1 *Cor.* 8. 1. ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῖ. It is that which *puffs up men* into all their proud contentions about Religion, which the World is filled withal. The other gives the Mind an experience of the power and efficacy of the Truth known, or diſcovered; ſo as to transforme the Soul and all its Affections into it; and thereby to give a *full aſſurance of Underſtanding* unto the Mind it ſelf, *Phil.* 1. 9. *Luke* 1. 4. *Col.* 1. 6, 9, 10. 2. 2. *chap.* 3. 10. *Rom.* 10. 2. *Epheſ.* 1. 17. *chap.* 4. 13. 1 *Tim.* 2. 4. 2 *Tim.* 2. 25,

2. 25. *chap.* 3. 7. *Tit.* 1. 1. 2 *Pet.* 1. 2, 3, 8. *chap.* 2. 20. It is not worth diſputing at all, what knowledge of the firſt kind, or what degree therein, men, any men, the worſt of men may attain by their induſtry and skill in other common Arts and Sciences. For what if they ſhould make ſuch a proficiency therein, as to be filled with pride in themſelves, and to confound others with their ſubtle Diſputations? will any real profit redound hence unto themſelves or the world or the Church of God? It doth not therefore deſerve the leaſt contention about it. But that *Acknowledgment* of the Truth which affects the heart, and conforms the ſoul unto the Will of God revealed, is not attainable in any degree without the *ſaving Illumination* of the Spirit of God.

2. Men may have a knowledge of *words*, and the *meaning* of propoſitions in the Scripture, who have no knowledge of the *things themſelves* deſigned in them. The things revealed in the Scripture are expreſſed in propoſitions whoſe words and tearms are intelligible unto the common Reaſon of mankind. Every rational man, eſpecially if he be skilled in thoſe *common Sciences and Arts* which all writings refer unto,

unto, may without any eſpecial aid of the Holy Ghoſt, know the meaning of the *Propoſitions* that are laid down in, or drawn from the Scripture. Yea they can do ſo, who believe not one word of it to be true; and they do ſo, as well as the beſt of them who have no *other help* in the underſtanding of the Scripture, but their own Reaſon, let them profeſs to believe what they will. And whatever men underſtand of the meaning of the words, *Expreſſions* and *Propoſitions* in the Scripture, if they believe not the *things* which they declare, they do not in any ſenſe *know the Mind and Will of God* in them. For to know a thing as the mind of God, and not to aſſent unto its Truth, implieth a contradiction. I ſhall never grant that a man underſtands the Scripture aright, who underſtands the words of it only, and not the things which is the mind of God in them. For inſtance, the *Jews* underſtand the words of the Scripture of the Old Teſtament in its own original language. And they are able to perceive the *grammatical ſenſe* and conſtruction of the Propoſitions contained in it. They are unacquainted with them, and their Writings, who will not acknowledge their skill, ſubtilty and accuracy in theſe

things. Yet will not any Christian say they *understand the Mind of God* in the Old Testament: The Apostle sheweth the contrary, and giveth the reason for it in the place before insisted on, 2 *Cor.* 3. Such a knowledge of the Scripture no wise man will value, let it be attained how it will.

3. This Knowledge that may be thus attained doth only *inform the mind* in the way of an *Artificial Science*, but doth not really *illuminate* it. And to this end men have turned *Divinity* into an *Art* like other common humane Arts and Sciences, and so they learn it instead of *a Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding of Divine Mysteries.* It is true, that the knowledge of common learned Arts and Sciences is of great use unto the understanding of the Scripture, as unto what they have in *common* with other writings, and what they refer unto that is of humane cognisance; but to bring in all the tearms, notions and rules of those *Arts and Sciences into Divinity*, and by the mixture of them with it, to compose a *Scheme* of Divine Knowledge, is all one as if a man should design to make up his *house* of the *Scaffolds*, which he only useth in the building of it. Such is that knowledge of the mind of God in the Scripture,

pture, which many aim at, and content themſelves withall. And it may be attained as any other *Art* or *Science* may, without any ſupernatural aid of the Holy Spirit, and is ſufficient to *drive a trade with*, which, as things are ſtated in the world, men may uſe and exerciſe unto their great advantage. But, as was ſaid before, it was not that which we enquire after. That Wiſdom in the myſtery of the Goſpel, that knowledge of the mind and will of God in the Scripture which *affects the heart*, and *transforms the mind* in the Renovation of it unto the approbation of the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Rom.* 12. 2. is alone valuable and deſirable, as unto all ſpiritual and eternal ends.

4. It doth not give πάντα πλοῦτον τῆς πληροφίας τῆς συνέσεως εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ, *all riches of full aſſurance of underſtanding to the acknowledgment of the myſtery of God*, as *Col.* 2. 2. The Apoſtle ſpeaks; It gives nnto men no other aſſurance of mind in the things that they know, but what they have from acknowledged principles and concluſions drawn from them, in any other Science. But that knowledge which men have of the myſteries

ries of the Gospel by the teaching and illumination of the Holy Spirit, gives them *the riches of assurance of understanding* of an higher nature, even the assurance of Faith. That assurance I say which Believers have in spiritual things, is of another nature and kind, then can be attained out of conclusions that are only rationally derived from the most evident principles. And therefore doth it produce effects of another nature both in doing and in suffering For this is that which effectually and infallibly puts them on all those duties and that obedience in self-denial, and the mortification of sin, which the world either knoweth not or despiseth. *For he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as God is pure*, 1 *John* 3. 3: And this also enables them chearfully and joyfully to suffer all that the world can inflict on them for the profession of those Truths whereof they have that *Assurance*. But nothing of this ensues on that common knowledge which men may have from themselves of sacred things. For,

5. It doth not enable men to *Trust in God*, and adhere firmly unto him by love. The *Psalmist* speaking unto God, saith, *They that know thy Name will put their trust in Thee*,

thee, Pſal. 9. 10. *To know the Name of God,* is to know the Revelations that he hath made of himſelf, his mind and his will in the Scripture. They that have this knowledge, he affirms, *will put their truſt in him.* Therefore it is certain that thoſe who *put not their truſt in God,* have not the knowledge of him. There is a γνῶσις ψευδώνυμος, *a knowledge falſely ſo called,* which hath nothing of real ſpiritual knowledge but the name. And it is generally much given to diſputing, or the maintaining of *Antitheſeſes,* or oppoſitions unto the Truth, 1 *Tim.* 6. 20. But it is *falſly* called *knowledge,* in as much as thoſe in whom it is, do neither *truſt* in God, nor *adhere* unto him in love. And we ſhall not much enquire, by what means ſuch a knowledge may be acquired.

It remaineth therefore notwithſtanding this Objection, that all real uſeful knowledge of the *wonderful things* that are in the Scripture, is an effect of God's *opening our eyes* by the illuminating grace of his Holy Spirit.

And this will enable us *to try the Spirits,* as we are commanded of many amongſt us. For ſome there are who at once have caſt off a due reſpect unto their *Rule* and *Guide,* the Scripture and holy Spirit of God.

God. Some formerly have pretended unto ſuch a guidance by the *Spirit*, as that they have neglected or rejected the *written Word*. And ſome pretend ſuch an adherence unto the *Word* and ſuch an ability in their own minds and reaſons to underſtand it, as to deſpiſe the *Teaching of the Spirit*. Others reject both the one and the other, betaking themſelves unto another *Rule* and *Guide*, whereunto they aſcribe all that belongs unto either or both of them. But a wandring *Light* it hath proved unto them, that hath lead them into a bog of many vain imaginations and corrupt Opinions. And it is fallen out with them as might be expected. For although the *Holy Spirit* be promiſed *to lead us into all Truth*, yet is he ſo in an eſpecial manner unto thoſe which concern the perſon, offices and grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt immediately, whoſe Spirit he is. See *John* 16. 13, 14, 15. 1 *John* 2. 27. Thoſe therefore who renounce a dependence on him for inſtruction out of the Word, are either left unto palpable *Ignorance* about theſe things, or unto *fooliſh corrupt imaginations* concerning them. Hence ſome of them openly deny, ſome faintly grant, but evidently corrupt the Truth, concerning the

the perſon of Chriſt; and as unto his Offices and Grace, they ſeem to have little regard. And what elſe can be expected from ſuch who deſpiſe the *Teaching of that Spirit* of Chriſt, who is promiſed to lead us into all Truth concerning him. Nor will the loudeſt pretences of ſome unto *the Spirit* in this matter relieve them. For we enquire not after *every ſpirit*, that any one who will, may make his boaſt of, but of that Spirlt alone which inſtructs us in and by the written Word. Until ſuch men will return unto the onely Rule and Guide of Chriſtians, until they will own it their duty to ſeek for the knowledge of Truth from the Scripture alone, and in their ſo doing depend not on any thing in themſelves, but the ſaving inſtructions of the Spirit of God, it is in vain to contend with them. For they and we build on divers foundations, and their faith and ours are reſolved into divers principles; ours into the Scripture, theirs into a light of their own. There are therefore no common acknowledged *principles* between us, whereon we may convince each other. And this is the cauſe that diſputes with ſuch perſons are generally fruitleſs, eſpecially as immixed with that intemperancy of reviling

ling other men, wherein they exceed. For if that be a way either of learning or teaching of the Truth, it is what the Scripture hath not inſtructed us in. When the *Vail* ſhall be taken from their eyes, and they turned unto the Lord, they will learn more modeſty and humility. In the mean time the iſſue between theſe men and us, is this and no other. We perſwade men to take the Scripture as the *only Rule*, and the holy promiſed Spirit of God ſought by ardent prayers and ſupplications in the uſe of all means appointed by Chriſt for that end, *for their Guide*. They deal with men to turn into themſelves, and to attend unto the Light within them: Whilſt we build on theſe moſt diſtant principles, the difference between us is irreconcilable, and will be eternal. Could we come to an agreement here, other things would fall away of themſelves If we ſhall *renounce the Scripture*, and the inſtruction given out of it unto the Church by the Spirit of God, betaking our ſelves unto *our own Light*, we are ſure it will teach us nothing, but either what they profeſs or other things altogether as corrupt. And if they on the other hand, will forgo their attendance to their pretended Light, to hearken unto *the voice*

of

of God in the Scripture only, and to beg ſincerely the guidance of the Holy Spirit therein, they will learn from thence no other thing but what we profeſs. Until therefore they return unto *the Law and Teſtimony*, without which whatſoever is pretended, there is no *Light* in any, we have no more to do, but labouring to preſerve the flock of Chriſt in the profeſſion of the *Truth once delivered unto the Saints*, to commit the difference between the *Word and Spirit* on the one hand, and the *Light within* on the other, unto the Deciſion of Jeſus Chriſt at the laſt day.

2. It is from no other Root that the contempt of the myſteries of the Goſpel, and the preferring of other doctrines before them, is ſprung up into ſo much bitter fruit among us. It is by the *Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation* alone, that our minds are enlightened to know what is the hope of God's Calling, and what are the Riches of his glorious grace. What is his Work herein upon our minds, & what upon the Word it ſelf, ſhall be afterwards declared. At preſent, from what hath been proved it is ſufficiently evident, that without his eſpecial gracious aid and aſſiſtance, no man can diſcern, like or approve of the myſte-

ries

ries of the Goſpel. And is it any wonder if perſons who avowedly deny moſt of his *bleſſed operations*, ſhould be either unacquainted with, or diſlike thoſe *myſteries*, ſo as to prefer that which is more ſuited unto their natural underſtanding and reaſon above them? For why ſhould men eſteem of thoſe things which they do not underſtand, at leaſt as they ought, nor will make uſe of the means whereby they may be enabled ſo to do? Wherefore if there be perſons of ſuch a pride and prophaneneſs, as to undertake an enquiry into the Scriptures, to know the Mind of God in them, and to teach it unto others, without prayers and ſupplications for the teaching, leading, guidance and aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, or which is worſe, contemn and deſpiſe all thoſe things as *Enthuſiaſtical*, it may not be expected that they ſhould ever underſtand, or approve of the myſteries that are contained therein. Is it not hence that both Teachers and Hearers make ſo *ſlow a progreſs* in the knowledge of the myſteries of the Goſpel, or grow ſo little in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt? How many are there amongſt us who for the time, and outward means are become as *babes*, and have need

of

of *Milk*, and not of ſtrong meat? Whence is it that ſo many Teachers do ſo little endeavour *to go on to perfection*, but content themſelves to dwell on the rudiments or *firſt principles* of our profeſſion? Is there not great ſtudying, and little profiting? great teaching, and little learning, much hearing, and little thriving? Do we abide in prayer, and abound in prayer, as we ought for that Spirit who *alone can lead us into all Truth*? for that *unction which teacheth us all things* with Aſſurance and Experience. I fear here lieth our defect. However this I ſhall ſay, that there is no duty, which in this world we perform unto God, that is more acceptable unto him, then *fervent prayers*, for a right underſtanding of his Mind and Will in his Word. For herein all the glory we give unto him, and the due performance of all our obedience do depend.

CHAP. IV.

The eſpecial work of the holy Spirit in the Illumination of our Minds unto the underſtanding of the Scripture, declared and vindicated. Objections propoſed and anſwered. The Nature of the Work aſſerted, Pſal. 119. 18. Epheſ. 1. 18. 1 Pet. 2. 9. Col. 1. 13. Luk. 24. 25. Joh 5. 20. *opened and vindicated.*

WE have as I ſuppoſe ſufficiently confirmed our firſt general Aſſertion concerning *the Neceſſity of an eſpecial Work of the Holy Ghoſt, in the Illumination of our minds, to make us underſtand the Mind of God as revealed in the Scripture.*

That which we proceed unto is to ſhew the *Eſpecial Nature* of his work herein. And I ſhall take occaſion thereunto from the conſideration of an Objection that is laid againſt the whole of what we affirm, which was touched on before.

For it is ſaid that there is no Need of this Endeavour: *All men do acknowledge that the Aid of the Spirit of God is neceſſary unto the ſtudy and Interpretation of the Scripture. And ſo it is unto all other undertakings*

ings that are good and lawful. And herein conſiſts the bleſſing of God upon mans own diligence and endeavours. If this be that which is intended, namely, the bleſſing of God upon our endeavours in the uſe of means, it is granted. But if any thing elſe be deſigned, it is nothing, but to take off all induſtry in the uſe of means, to reject all helps of reaſon and learning, which is in the end to reduce into perfect Enthuſiaſms.

Anſw. 1. Whether by the Aſſignation of his *own Work* unto the Spirit of God we take away or weaken the uſe of *other Means* for the right interpretation of the Scriptures will be tryed when we come unto the examination of thoſe waies and means. At preſent I ſhall only ſay, that we eſtabliſh them. For by aſſigning unto them their proper place and uſe, we do manifeſt their ~~Work~~ and Neceſſity. But thoſe by whom they or any of them are advanced into the place, and unto the *excluſion* of the operation of the Holy Spirit, do deſtroy them, or render them inacceptable unto God, and uſeleſs unto the ſouls of men. We ſhall therefore manifeſt that the *Aſſignations* which we make in this matter unto the Holy Spirit, do render all our uſe of proper means for the right *In-*

terpretation of the Scripture in a way of duty, indiſpenſibly neceſſary; and the principal reaſon, ſo far as I can underſtand, why ſome deny the Neceſſity of the work of the Holy Spirit herein, is becauſe they like not thoſe means whoſe neceſſary uſe doth ariſe from an admiſſion thereof.

But thus it hath fallen out in other things. Thoſe who have declared any thing either of the *Doctrine*, or of the *Power* of the grace of the Goſpel, have been traduced as oppoſing the principles of Morality and Reaſon, whereas on their grounds alone, their true value can be diſcovered, and their proper uſe directed. So the Apoſtle Preaching Faith in Chriſt with Righteouſneſs, and Juſtification thereby, was accuſed to have made void the Law, whereas without his Doctrine the Law would have been void, or of no uſe to the ſouls of men. So he pleads, *Rom.* 3. *v.* 31. *Do we then make void the Law through Faith? Godforbid, yea we eſtabliſh the Law.* So to this day, Juſtification by the Imputation of the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and the Neceſſity of our own obedience, the Efficacy of Divine grace in converſion, and the liberty of our own wills, the Stability of God's Promiſes, and our diligent

diligent uſe of means are ſuppoſed inconſiſtent. So it is here alſo. The Neceſſity of the communication of ſpiritual light unto our minds to enable us to underſtand the Scriptures, and the exerciſe of our own Reaſon in the uſe of external means, are look'd on as irreconcilable. But as the Apoſtle ſaith, *Do we make void the Law by Faith? yea we eſtabliſh it*; though he did it not in that place, nor unto thoſe ends that the *Jews* would have had and uſed it. So we may ſay, do we by aſſerting the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, make void our own obedience; by the Efficacy of grace, deſtroy the liberty of our wills; by the neceſſity of Spiritual Illumination, take away the uſe of Reaſon? yea we eſtabliſh them: We do it not, it may be, in ſuch a way, or in ſuch a manner as ſome would fancy, and which would render them all on our part really uſeleſs, but in a clear conſiſtency with, and proper ſubſerviency unto the work of God's Spirit and grace.

2. That in particular which lieth before us, is to remove that pretence of ſome, *that we need no other Aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God for the right underſtanding of the Scripture, but only his bleſſing in general on our own endeavours.* To this end two things

are to inquired into, (1.) What Deſcription is given of this *Work* in the Scripture, and what are the Effects of it in our minds in *general.* (2.) What is the *Nature of it in particular.*

1. The Work it ſelf is variouſly expreſſed in the Scripture. And it is that which whether we will or no, we muſt be determined by in things of this kind. And the variety of expreſſion ſerves both unto the confirmation of its Truth, and illuſtration of its Nature.

A. It is declared by *opening of our Eyes*, *Pſal.* 119. 18. *The inlightening of the eyes of our underſtanding*, *Epheſ.* 1. 18. This *opening of our Eyes* conſiſts in the communication of ſpiritual light unto our minds by the Preaching of the Word, as it is declared, *Acts* 26. 17, 18. And the expreſſion though in part *Metaphorical*, is eminently inſtructive in the Nature of this Work. For ſuppoſe the neareſt and beſt diſpoſed propoſition of any object unto our bodily eyes, with an external light properly ſuited unto the diſcovery of it, yet if our *Eyes be blind*, or are cloſed beyond our own power to *open* them, we cannot diſcern it aright. Wherefore on a ſuppoſition of the propoſal unto our minds of the Divine

Divine Truths of ſupernatural Revelation, and that in waies and by means ſuited unto the conveyance of it unto them, which is done in the Scripture, and by the Miniſtry of the Church with other outward means; yet without this Work of the Spirit of God, called the *opening of our Eyes*, we cannot diſcern it in a due manner. And if this be not intended in this expreſſion, it is no way *inſtructive*, but rather ſuited to lead us into a miſunderſtanding of what is declared, and of our own duty. So it is plainly expreſſed, *Luke* 24.25. *Then opened he their underſtanding, that they might underſtand the Scriptures.* None I ſuppoſe will deny but that it is the Work of the Spirit of God thus *to open our Eyes*, or to *inlighten our Underſtandings*, for this were to deny the expreſs Teſtimony of the Scripture, and thoſe frequently reiterated. But ſome ſay, he doth this by the *Word* only, and the Preaching of it. No other Work of his, they affirm, is neceſſary hereunto, or to make us rightly to diſcern the Mind of God in the Scripture, but that it be propoſed unto us in a due manner, provided we purge our minds from prejudices, and corrupt affections. And this is the Work of the Spirit in that he is the *Author of the*

Scripture, which he makes uſe of for our Illumination. And it is granted, that the Scripture is the only external means of our Illumination. But in theſe Teſtimonies it is conſidered only as the Object thereof. They expreſs a work of the Spirit or Grace of God *upon our minds*, with reſpect unto the Scripture as its object, *Open my Eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law*. The Law or the Scripture, with the wonderful things contained therein, are the *things to be known*, to be diſcovered and underſtood. But the means inabling us thereunto, is an *internal Work* upon our minds themſelves, which is plainly expreſſed in diſtinction from the *things to be known*. This is the ſumme of what we plead, there is an Efficacious Work of the Spirit of God, opening our Eyes, or inlightening our Underſtandings or Minds, to underſtand the things contained in the Scripture diſtinct from the objective propoſitions of them in the Scripture it ſelf, which the Teſtimonies urged do fully confirm.

2. It is expreſſed, as a *Tranſlation out of darkneſs into light*, he hath called us out of *darkneſs into marvelous light*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 9. *Delivered us from the power of darkneſs*, *Col.* 1. 13. whereby we who were *dark-*

neſs

neſs became light in the Lord, Epheſ. 5. 8. That in theſe and the like Teſtimonies, the removal of the inward darkneſs of our minds, by the communication of ſpiritual light unto them, and not meerly the objective Revelation of Truth in the Scripture is intended, I have proved at large elſewhere, and therefore ſhall not again inſiſt thereon.

3. It is directly called, *the giving of us an underſtanding; we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us underſtanding that we may know him that is true,* 1 *Joh.* 5. 20. The object of our Underſtanding, or that which we know, is *he that is True.* God himſelf even the Father is primarily intended in this expreſſion; for in the following words there is mention of his *Son Jeſus Chriſt*, who is in like manner ſaid to be *True*, becauſe of his Unity in Eſſence with the Father. And therefore it is added, *That this is the True God, v.* 21. But we are to know alſo what concerns *our being in him*, and to know *him as he is Eternal Life.* And thoſe things contain the ſubſtance of all Evangelical Revelations, which one way or other depend upon them, and are reſolved into them, *John* 17. 3. To know the *Father* the only True God, and the Son as the

True

True God alſo in the Unity of the ſame Eſſence, to know that *Eternal Life* which was with the Father as unto the Eternal counſel and preparation of it, 1 *John* 1. 2. and is *in the Son* for its actual communication unto us, and to know our *being in him* by a participation thereof, the things we mentioned, is to know the Mind of God as revealed in the Scripture; eſpecially theſe things are intended which are *fooliſhneſs* unto corrupted *Reaſon*, and as ſuch are rejected by it, 1 *Cor.* 1. 23, 24. *chap.* 2. 14.

And two things we are to enquire into with reference unto this knowledge;

What we are to have, to enable us unto it, and that is an *underſtanding*.

How we come by it, *It is given us by the Son of God*.

That which we have διάνοια; this word in all other places of the New Teſtament, doth conſtantly denote the Eſſential faculty of our ſouls, which we call *underſtanding*, *Matth.* 22. 37. *Mark* 12. 30. *Luke* 10. 27. *Epheſ.* 1. 18. 2, 3, 4, 18. *Col.* 1. 21. *Heb.* 8. 10. 1 *Pet.* 1. 13. 2 *Pet.* 3. 1. And it ſeems in the Scripture to be diſtinguiſhed from the *Mind*, by reſpect unto *Actual Exerciſe* only. The Mind in its exerciſe in our underſtanding; but it cannot be the Natu-

Natural and Eſſential faculty of our ſouls, that is here intended; for although our Natures are corrupted by ſin, and not repaired but by Jeſus Chriſt; yet doth not that corruption nor reparation denote the *deſtroying* or New *Creation* of this being, or the Nature of thoſe faculties, which continue the ſame in both Eſtates: wherefore the Underſtanding here mentioned is no more *but a power and ability of Mind with reſpect unto what is propoſed unto us*, to receive and apprehend it in a due manner; we are not able of our ſelves *to know him that is True, and the* Eternal *Life that is in him*, but he hath enabled us thereunto; for this *Underſtanding* is *given* us unto that end, that we may ſo know him. Wherefore whatever is propoſed unto us in the Goſpel, or in any Divine Revelation, concerning theſe things, we cannot *know them*, at leaſt as we ought, unleſs we have the *Underſtanding* here mentioned given unto us, for ſo alone do we come by it.

2. It is *given* us, that a real and *Effectual Communication* unto us of the thing ſaid to be *given*, is intended in this word, of giving from God, is evident from every place in the Scripture where it is uſed. Some contend that God is ſaid to *give*

things

things unto us, when *he doth what lyes in him* that we may enjoy them, though we are never made partakers of them. But the aſſignation of this way and manner of *God's doing what lieth in him*, where the Effect deſigned doth not enſue, not ſtrictly reſtrained unto outward means, is ſcandalous, and fit to be exploded out of Chriſtian *Theologie*. God ſaies, *What could have been done more to my Vineyard that I have not done? Iſa.* 5. 4. But the expreſſion hath plainly a double limitation, (1.) Unto the *Uſe of outward Means* only, concerning which God ſpeaks in that place, and from which he elſewhere plainly diſtinguiſheth his *giving them a new heart*, and a *new ſpirit*, that they ſhall all know him, and be all taught of him. (2.) Unto the *Uſe of thoſe outward Means* that were *then eſtabliſhed*, as the only way for the ſeaſon; for even in reſpect unto them he did more *for his Vineyard* when he granted the Goſpel unto it. But is it poſſible that any man ſhould think or believe that God cannot really *collate grace* and mercy on the ſouls of men when he pleaſeth? Is it not as eaſy with him, on our Reſtauration by Chriſt, to implant *habits of grace* on our ſouls, as it was at firſt to create us in *Original Recti-*

Rectitude and Righteouſneſs? Wherefore although we may enquire what God *doth*, and *hath done* in this matter according as he hath revealed it in his word, yet to ſay that he doth in any thing, *what lieth in him*, though the things which he affirms himſelf to do, be not effected, is defective both in Truth and Piety. When he ſaith he hath done ſuch a thing, or will do ſo; for us to ſay, No he hath not done ſo, or he will not do ſo, but he hath done, or will do what lies in him that it may be ſo, though it never be ſo, nor have ~~ſo~~ been is, to make him altogether like our ſelves. But on this ground ſome pretend that *the Son of God is ſaid to have given men Underſtanding*, becauſe he hath done what is *requiſite on his part* in the Declaration of the Goſpel, that we may have it, whether ever we have it or no. But (1.) what he is ſaid to *have done*, he had at leaſt a deſign to do, and if he had ſo, why doth it not take effect? It is, they ſay, becauſe of the *unwillingneſs of men to turn unto him*, and other *vicious habits* of their minds, which hinders them from receiving inſtruction. But if it be ſo, then (1.) It is ſuppoſed that men alſo in their teachings can *give us an Underſtanding*, as well as the Son of God; for

for they may teach men the knowledge of the Goſpel, if they are *willing to learn*, and have no darling luſts or *vicious habits* of mind to hinder them from learning. (2.) Seeing he hath taken this work on himſelf, and deſigns its accompliſhment, cannot the *Son of God by his grace* remove thoſe *vicious habits* of the minds of men, that they may have an underſtanding of theſe things? If he *cannot*, why doth he take that on him which he cannot effect? If he *will not*, why doth he promiſe to do that which can never be done, without doing of what he will not do? and why is he ſaid to do, (as he is according to this interpretation of the words) which he hath not done, which he will not or cannot do. (2.) The giving of *an Underſtanding* is in this place plainly diſtinguiſhed from the *propoſition of the things to be underſtood*; that conſiſts in the Doctrine of the Goſpel, this in an ability to comprehend and know it.

Again, the words here uſed, of *giving Underſtanding*, may indeed expreſs the actings or operations of men towards others, when an external propoſal of things to be underſtood, with the due uſe of means, is intended. But yet if under their *teaching* men do not *learn* or comprehend the

the things wherein they are inſtructed by them, they cannot properly be ſaid to have *given them an underſtanding of it* with reſpect unto their moral operation unto that End, but only to have *Endeavoured* ſo to do. But when this Phraiſe of ſpeech is uſed to expreſs *a Divine* operation, which queſtionleſs may be really *Phyſical*, and ſo abſolutely Efficacious, to Interpret it concerning an *Endeavour* that may, or may not ſucceed, is not ſuitable unto thoſe thoughts that become us concerning Divine Operations. Now was there any Reaſon why the Apoſtle ſhould *Emphatically* aſſigne this work, unto the Son of God, and that as he is the true God and Eternal Life; if no more be intended but a work of the ſame nature and kind, with what a man might do. And if this be the ſenſe of the Words; it is from *our ſelves* and not from the *ſon of God*, that there is any Truth in them, as unto the Event. For he might do it ſeems, what lies in him to *give an underſtanding*; and yet no one man in the world ever had an underſtanding of the Nature deſigned; for if it may be ſo with *any* unto whom he is ſaid to give an underſtanding, as it is profeſſedly with the moſt; it may be ſo with *all*: not further to debate

debate these things at present, whereas so excellent a grace and Mercy towards the Souls of Men, is here expressedly attributed unto the Son of God, as the Author of it; Namely, that *he gives us an Understanding that we may know him, which is true*; I cannot think, that they Interpret the Scripture unto his Glory, whose Exposition of this place consists in nothing but endeavours to prove that indeed *he doth not so do.*

4. It is Expressed by *teaching*, *leading*, and *guiding into the Truth*, Joh. 6. 45. *chap.* 16. 13. 1 Joh. 2. 20, 27. the places have been opened before; and two things are supposed in this Expression of *Teaching.* 1. *A mind capable of Instruction, Leading and Conduct*: the nature must be *rational* and comprehensive of the means of Instruction, which can be so *taught.* Wherefore we do not only grant herein the use of the rational Faculties of the Soul, but require their *Exercise* and utmost improvement: If God *Teacheth* we are to *learn*, and we cannot learn but in the Exercise of our Minds. And it is in vain pretended, that God's Communication of a Supernatural Ability unto our Minds, and our exercise of them in a way of Duty,

are

are *Inconſiſtent*; Whereas indeed they are *inſeparable* in all that we are taught of God. For at the ſame time that he *Infuſeth a gracious Ability* into our minds, he propoſeth the Truth unto us, whereon that Ability is to be Exerciſed. And if thoſe things are Inconſiſtent, the whole real Efficacy of God in the Souls of Men, muſt be denied; which is to diſpoile him of his Soveraignty; But we ſpeak now of Natural Ability to receive Inſtruction, to be taught, with the Exerciſe of it in learning. For theſe are ſuppoſed in the Expreſſion of the Communication of a Spiritual Ability by *Teaching*. (2) A *Teaching* ſuited unto that Ability is promiſed or Aſſerted, three ways of this Teaching are pleaded: (1) That it conſiſts in a θεοπνευστια *an Immediate Infallible Inſpiration and afflatus*, of the ſame Nature with that of the Prophets and Apoſtles of old. But (1) This takes away the diſtinction between the *Extraordinary* and *Ordinary* gifts of the Spirit ſo fully Aſſerted in the Scripture, as we ſhall elſewhere declare. And if it were ſo, God did not place in the Church *ſome Prophets*, ſeeing all were ſo, and were alwaies to be ſo. (2) It brings in a Neglect of the Scripture, and a

levelling it into the ſame ſtate and condition with the conceptions of every one that will pretend unto this *Inſpiration*. (3.) The pretence viſibly confutes it ſelf, in the manifold mutual contradictions of them that pretend unto it. And would (4.) Thereon be a principle firſt of confuſion, then of infidelity, and ſo lead unto Atheiſm. (5.) The *Prophets* themſelves had not the knowledge and underſtanding of the mind and will of God which we enquire after by their *Immediate Inſpirations* which were unto them as the written word unto us; but had it by the ſame means as we have, 1 *Pet.* 1. 10, 11. Hence they ſo frequently and fervently *prayed for Underſtanding*, as we have ſeen in the inſtance of *David*.

Wherefore (2.) Some ſay this *Teaching* conſiſts only in the outward Preaching of the Word, in the Miniſtry of the Church, and other external means of its application unto our minds. But there is not one of the Teſtimonies inſiſted on, where in this promiſed *Teaching of God*, is not diſtinguiſhed from the propoſition of the word in the outward diſpenſation of it, as hath been proved. Beſides, every one that enjoyes this Teaching, that is, who is taught

taught of God, doth really believe and come to Chriſt thereby. *John* 6.45. *It is written in the Prophets, and they ſhall be all taught of God, every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me*, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour. But it is not thus with all, nor ever was, towards whom the moſt powerful and cogent means of outward Inſtruction have been or are uſed.

Wherefore (3.) This Teaching is an *Internal work of the ſpirit*, giving Light, Wiſdom, Underſtanding unto our minds, ſo is ſpoken of, and promiſed in an eſpecial manner diſtinct from the outward work of the diſpenſation of the Word, and all the Efficacy of it ſingly conſidered. One Teſtimony will ſerve to this purpoſe which hath been pleaded and vindicated already. It is by an *Unction* that we are thus *Taught*, 1 *John* 2. 20, 21. But the Unction conſiſts in a real Communication of Supernatural gifts and graces; whereof *Supernatural light* is that which is peculiarly neceſſary unto this end. The Communication of them all, in all fulneſs unto Jeſus Chriſt the head of the Church was his *Unction*, *Heb.* 1. 9. *Iſa.* 61. 1. Wherefore in the real participation of them in our

Meaſure doth our Unction whereby we are taught conſiſt.

It is granted that this teaching is ſuch as *regards our own Induſtry* in the uſe of means Appointed unto this end, that we may know the mind of God in the Scripture. But yet it is ſuch as includes an *inward Effectual Operation* of the Holy Spirit concomitant with the outward means of Teaching and Learning. When the *Eunuch* read the *Prophecy of Iſaiah*, he affirmed he *could not underſtand it* unleſs ſome one did *guide* him. Hereon *Philip* opened the Scripture unto him; but it was the Holy Ghoſt that opened his Heart, that he might underſtand it; for ſo he did *the heart of Lydia*, without which ſhe would not have underſtood the Preaching of *Paul*, *Acts* 16. 14. Wherefore in our learning, under the conduct or Teaching of the Spirit, the utmoſt diligence in the exerciſe of our own minds is required of us. And where men are defective herein, they are ſaid to be νωθροὶ ταῖς ἀκοαῖς, *Heb.* 5. 11. *dull in hearing*, or ſlow in the improvement of the inſtruction given them. And it is a ſenſleſs thing to imagine that men ſhould be diverted from the exerciſe of the faculties of their minds, meerly becauſe

cauſe they are enabled to uſe them unto good purpoſe, or ſucceſsfully, which is the Effect of this Internal Teaching.

5. It is expreſſed *by ſhining into our hearts: God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined into our hearts; to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. Jeſus Chriſt is the *Image of the Inviſible God, the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs Image of his perſon.* And that becauſe of the illuſtrious repreſentation of all Divine Excellencies, that are made both in his perſon and his Mediation. The perſon of the Father is the Eternal Fountain of infinitely Divine glorious perfections; and they are all communicated unto the Son by Eternal Generation. In his perſon *abſolutely* as the Son of God, they are all of them *Eſſentially*; in his perſon as God Man, as veſted with his Offices, they are *ſubſtantially* in oppoſition unto all types and ſhadows; and in the glaſs of the Goſpel they are *accidentally* by Revelation; *really*, but not *ſubſtantially*, for Chriſt himſelf is the body, the ſubſtance of all. As the *Image of God*, ſo is he repreſented unto us in the glaſs of the Goſpel, and therein are we called *to be-*

hold the glory of God in him, *chap.* 3.18. The meaning is, that the Truth and Doctrine concerning Jeſus Chriſt his Perſon and Mediation, is ſo delivered and taught in the Goſpel, as that the Glory of God is eminently repreſented thereby, or therein is revealed what we are to know of God, his Mind and his Will as he is declared by and in Jeſus Chriſt. But why is it then that all do not thus *behold the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt* unto whom the Goſpel is Preached? or whence is it that all unto whom the Goſpel is Preached or declared do not apprehend and underſtand the truth and reality, and glory of the things revealed or propoſed? that is, why they do not underſtand the Mind and Will of God as revealed in the Goſpel? The Apoſtle aſſigneth two reaſons hereof, (1.) From what *hindereth it in many*; (2.) From what is *neceſſary unto any* that ſo they may do.

1. The firſt is the *Efficacy of the temptations and ſuggeſtions of Satan*, whereby their minds are filled with prejudices againſt the Goſpel and the Doctrine of it, being blinded hereby, they can ſee nothing of beauty and glory in it, and ſo certainly do not apprehend it aright. *V.* 4. *The God*

of

of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt who is the Image of God ſhould ſhine into them. This is acknowledged by all to be an obſtacle againſt the right underſtanding of the Goſpel. Unleſs the mind be freed from ſuch *prejudices* as are the Effects of ſuch *blinding Efficacy* of the ſuggeſtions of Satan, men cannot attain unto the true knowledge of the Mind of God therein. How theſe prejudices are removed we ſhall ſhew afterwards. But if the mind be free, or freed from them, then it is ſuppoſed by ſome, that there is need of no more but the due exerciſe of its faculties with diligence for that end, nor is any thing elſe required thereunto. It is true, in the ordinary diſpenſation of Divine Grace this is required of us. But the Apoſtle adds,

2. That there muſt moreover be a *Divine Light ſhining into our hearts*, to enable us hereunto. At leaſt he doth ſo that this was granted unto them who *then did believe*. And if we have it not, as well as they, I fear we do not believe in the ſame manner as they did. Wherefore although there be in the Goſpel, and the Doctrine of it, an illuſtrious repreſentation of the

Glory of God in Chriſt; yet are we not able of our ſelves to diſcern it, until the holy Spirit by an Act of his Almighty Power do *irradiate* our minds, and implant a light upon them ſuited thereunto. He that doth not *behold the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt in the Goſpel*, doth not underſtand the Mind and Will of God as revealed therein, in a due manner. I ſuppoſe this will be granted, ſeeing both theſe things are but one and the ſame diverſly expreſſed. But this of our ſelves we cannot do. For there is an internal work of God upon our minds neceſſary thereunto. This alſo is expreſſed in the words. It is his *ſhining into our hearts to give the Light of this Knowledge unto us*; There is a Light in the Goſpel; *the Light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt*, *ver.* 4. But there muſt be a *Light alſo in our Hearts*, or we cannot diſcern it. And this is no natural Light, or a Light that is common unto all; but it is a Light that in a way of grace is given unto them that do believe. And it is wrought in us by the ſame kind of Efficiency, as God *created Light* at the beginning of the world; namely, by a productive Act of Power. It is evident therefore that the *Light in our Hearts*, which God

God communicates unto us, that we may have the true Knowledge of his Mind and Will in the Goſpel, is diſtinct from that *Light of Truth* which is in the Goſpel it ſelf. The one is *Subjective*, the other is *Objective* only; the one is wrought in us, the other is propoſed unto us; the one is an Act of Divine Power in us, the other an Act of Divine Grace and Mercy towards us.

Other waies there are whereby this Operation of the Holy Spirit in the Illumination of our minds is expreſſed. The Inſtances given, and Teſtimonies conſidered, are ſufficient unto our purpoſe. That which we are in the proof of is, that there is more required unto an uſeful apprehenſion & underſtanding of the Mind of God in the Scripture, then the meer *Objective Propoſal* of it unto us, and our diligent uſe of outward means to come to the knowledge of it; which yet as we ſhall ſhew is from the Holy Spirit alſo. And as the denial hereof doth by juſt conſequence make void the *Principal Means* whereby we may come unto ſuch an underſtanding, namely, frequent and fervent prayers for the aid and aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit; ſo no tolerable account can be given of the Mind of

of God, and the meaning of the Scripture in the places inſiſted on. And certainly we cannot underſtand the way and manner of the operation of the Holy Spirit herein, it were much better to *captivate our Underſtanding unto the obedience of Truth*, then to wreſt and pervert the Scripture, or debaſe the ſpiritual ſenſe of it unto a compliance with our conceptions and apprehenſions. But as we have herein the ſuffrage of them that do believe, in their own experience, who both value and acknowledge this grace and priviledge unto the Glory of God; ſo we have multiplied Inſtances of ſuch as being deſtitute of that skill which ſhould enable them to make uſe of ſundry external means which are in their proper place of great advantage, who yet by vertue of this *Divine Teaching* are wiſe in the things of God, beyond what ſome others with all their skill, can attain unto.

Moreover, the *Effect* of this Work of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, doth evidence of what nature it is. And this alſo is variouſly expreſſed. As,

1. It is called *Light. Ye were Darkneſs, but are now Light in the Lord, Epheſ.* 5. 8. The introduction of Light into the mind is the

the proper Effect of Illumination. Men in their natural estate are said to be *darkness*, the *abstract* for the *concrete*, to express how deeply the mind is affected with it; for as our Saviour saith, *If the Light that is in any be darkness*, (as it is in them who are darkness) *how great is that darkness!* *Mat.* 6. 23. And because men are subject to mistake herein, and to suppose themselves with the *Pharisees* to see, when they are blind, he gives that caution, *Take heed therefore that the Light which is in thee be not darkness*, *Luke* 11. 35. For men are very apt to please themselves with the working and improvement of their natural Light, which yet in the issue with respect unto spiritual things, will prove but darkness. And while they are under the power of this darkness, that is, while their minds are deeply affected with their natural ignorance, they *cannot perceive spiritual things*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 14. no not when they are most evidently proposed unto them. For although *the Light shine in darkness*, or cast out its beams in the evidence and glory of spiritual Truth, yet *the darkness comprehendeth it not*, *John* 1. 5. But by this work of the Holy Spirit we are made *Light in the Lord*. Light in the mind is a spiritual

ability

ability to discern and know spiritual things, as is declared, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. This is bestowed upon us, and communicated unto us by the Holy Spirit. There is a real difference between Light and Darkness. And it is our minds that are affected with them, *Luk.* 11. 35. The removal of the one, and the introduction of the other, are things not absolutely in our own power: He who is Darkness, cannot make himself Light in the Lord. Whatever he may do in way of disposition or preparation, in way of duty and diligence, in the utmost improvement of the natural faculties of his mind, (which no man will ever rise unto who is under the power of this Darkness, because of the insuperable prejudices, and corrupt affections that it fills the mind withall) yet the *introduction of this* Light is an Act of him who openeth the eyes of our understandings, and shines into our Hearts. Without this *Light* no man can understand the Scripture as he ought; and I shall not contend about what they see or behold who are in darkness.

The expulsion of *Spiritual Darkness* out of our minds, and the introduction of *Spiritual Light* into them, a work so great, that they who were *Darkness*, whose *Light*

was

was Darkneſs, are made *Light* in the Lord thereby, is an Effect of the immediate Power of the Spirit of God. To aſcribe other low and *metaphorical* ſenſes unto the words, is to corrupt the Scripture, and to deny the Teſtimony of God. For this *Light* he produceth in us by the ſame Power, and the ſame manner of operation, whereby he brought Light out of Darkneſs at the Creation of all things. But by this way and means it is, that we attain the knowledge of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, or the Revelation of his Mind and Will in the Goſpel.

2. It is called *Underſtanding*. So the Pſalmiſt prayes, *Give me underſtanding and I ſhall keep thy Law*, *Pſal.* 119. 34. So the Apoſtle ſpeaks to *Timothy*; *Conſider what I ſay, and the Lord give thee underſtanding in all things*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 7. Beſides his own *conſideration* of what was propoſed unto him, which includes the due and diligent uſe of all outward means: It was moreover neceſſary that *God ſhould give him underſtanding* by an inward effectual work of his Spirit, that he might comprehend the things wherein he was inſtructed. And the deſire hereof, as of that without which there can be no ſaving knowledge of the Word,

Word, nor advantage by it, the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſeth *emphatically* with great fervency of ſpirit, *Pſal.* 119. 144. *The Righteouſneſs of thy Teſtimonies is everlaſting. O give me underſtanding and I ſhall live.* Without this he knew that he could have no benefit by the Everlaſting Righteouſneſs of the Teſtimonies of God. All underſtanding indeed, however it be abuſed by the moſt, is the work and effect of the Holy Ghoſt. For the *Inſpiration of the Almighty giveth Underſtanding*, *Job* 32. 8. So is this Spiritual Underſtanding in an eſpecial manner. And in this Underſtanding both the ability of our minds, and the due exerciſe of it is included. And this one conſideration that the Saints of God have with ſo much earneſtneſs prayed that God would *give them Underſtanding in his Mind and Will*, as revealed in the Word, with his reiterated Promiſes that he would ſo do, is of more weight with me, then all the diſputes of men to the contrary. And there is no further Argument neceſſary to prove that men do not underſtand the Mind of God in the Scripture in a due manner, then their ſuppoſal and confidence that ſo they can do, without the communication of a *Spiritual Underſtanding* unto them by the Holy Spirit

rit of God; which is ſo contrary unto the plain expreſs Teſtimonies thereof.

3. It is called *Wiſdom*. For by this work on the minds of men they are rendred *Wiſe* unto ſalvation. So the Apoſtle prays for the *Coloſſians*, *That God would fill them with the knowledge of his Will in all Wiſdom and Spiritual Underſtanding*, *chap.* 1. 9. Theſe things may be the ſame, and the latter *Exegetical* of the former. If there be a difference, *Wiſdom* reſpects things in general, in their whole *ſyſteme* and *complex*; *Underſtanding* reſpects particulars as they are to be reduced unto practice. Wherefore the Spiritual Underſtanding which the Apoſtle prays for, reſpects the Mind of God in eſpecial or particular places of the Scripture; and Wiſdom is a skill and ability in the comprehenſion of the whole ſyſteme of his counſel, as revealed therein. He who is thus *made wiſe*, and he alone can *underſtand* the things of God as he ought, *Dan.* 12. 10. *Hoſ.* 14. 9. *Pſal.* 107. 45. Although men may bear themſelves high on their Learning, their natural abilities, their fruitful inventions, tenacious memories, various fancies, plauſibility of expreſſion, with long ſtudy and endeavours, things good and praiſe-worthy in their kind and order:

order; yet unleſs they are thus *made wiſe* by the Spirit of God, they will ſcarce attain a due acquaintance with his Mind and Will. For this effect of that work is alſo expreſly called *Knowledge*, *Col.* 1. 9. 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. *Epheſ.* 1. 17. *Col.* 3. 10. Wherefore without it we cannot have that which is properly ſo called.

This is the ſecond thing deſigned in this Diſcourſe. In the firſt it was proved in general, that there is an *Effectual Operation of the Spirit of God on the minds of men*, enabling them to perceive and underſtand the ſupernatural Revelations of the Scripture when propoſed unto them. And in the ſecond is declared, what is the *nature of that work*, and what are the effects of it on our minds. Both of them have I treated meerly from Scripture Teſtimony. For in vain ſhall we ſeek to any other way or means for what we ought to apprehend and believe herein. Neither is the force of theſe Teſtimonies to be eluded by any diſtinctions or *evaſions* whatever. Nor whilſt the Authority of the Scripture is allowed, can any men more effectually evidence the weakneſs and depravation of their *Reaſon*, then by contending that in the exerciſe of it; they can underſtand the Mind and

and Will of God, as revealed therein, without the especial Aid and Illumination of the Spirit of God. Nor can any man on that supposition with any wisdom or consistency in his own principles, make use in a way of duty of the Principal means whereby we may so understand them, as will afterwards more fully appear.

CHAP. V.

Causes of the Ignorance of the Mind of God revealed in the Scripture; *and of* Errours *about it; what they are; and how they are removed.*

THE Supposition we proceed upon in this Discourse is, that *God hath revealed his Mind and Will unto us, as unto all things concerning his Worship, with our Faith and Obedience therein, in the Holy Scripture.* Thereon do we enquire by what means we may attain the *saving Knowledge* of the Mind of God so revealed. And my principal design is to shew, what *Aid and Assistance* we receive from the Holy Ghost unto that End. To further us in the know-

ledge hereof, I ſhall enquire into the *Cauſes and Reaſons of that Ignorance*, and thoſe miſapprehenſions of the Mind of God as revealed, which are amongſt men, and how our minds are delivered from them.

It may be this part of our Diſcourſe might have had a more proper place aſſigned unto it, after we have given the Truth pleaded a more full confirmation. But whereas an Objection may ariſe from the conſideration of what we ſhall now inſiſt on, againſt the Truth contended for; I thought it not amiſs ſo to obviate it, as therewithall farther to illuſtrate the Doctrine it ſelf, which we labour in.

All men ſee, and moſt men complain of that ignorance of the Mind of God, and thoſe abominable Errours attended with falſe Worſhip which abound in the world. How few are there who underſtand and believe the Truth aright? What *diviſions*, what *ſcandals*, what *animoſities*, what *violence*, mutual rage and perſecutions, do enſue hereon, among them that are called Chriſtians, is likewiſe known. Hence ſome take occaſion to countenance themſelves in an open declenſion unto *Atheiſm*, ſome unto a great *indifferency* in all Religion, ſome to advance themſelves and deſtroy

deſtroy others, by the advantage of their Opinions, according as they are prevalent in ſome times and places. A brief Enquiry into the Cauſes of that *Darkneſs* and *Ignorance* which is in the world amongſt men outwardly owning the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and eſpecially of the *Errours* and *Hereſies* which do abound above what they have done in moſt Ages, may be of uſe to preſerve us from thoſe evils. A ſubject this is, that would require much time and diligence unto the handling of it in a due manner. I intend only at preſent to point at the *Heads of ſome few things*, the obſervation whereof may be of uſe unto the end deſigned.

Thoſe of the *Roman Church* tell us, that the cauſe hereof is, the *obſcurity, difficulty, and perplexity of the Scripture.* If men will truſt thereunto as their only Guide, they are ſure to miſcarry. Wherefore the only relief in this matter is, that we give up our ſouls unto the *conduct of their Church*, which neither can erre, nor deceive. So indeed ſaid *Adam* of old, when he was charged with his ſin and infidelity; *The woman that thou gaveſt to be with me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* But whereas it is an evil, yea the greateſt of

evils, whoſe cauſes we enquire after, it ſeems in general more rational that we ſhould ſeek for them in *our ſelves*, then in any thing that God hath done. For he alone is good and we are evil.

It is granted that God hath given us his Word, or the holy Scriptures as a Declaration of his Mind and Will; and therefore he hath given it unto us for this very end and purpoſe, that we may know them and do them. But whereas many men do fail herein, and do not underſtand aright what is revealed, but fall into pernicious errours and miſtakes unto his diſhonour and their own ruine, is it meet to ſay unto God, that this comes to paſs from hence, becauſe the Revelation he hath made of theſe things is *dark*, *obſcure and intricate*? or the Scripture which thou haſt given us doth deceive us? would a due reverence or deferency unto the Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Love of God unto Mankind be preſerved therein; *Audax omnia perpeti gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas.* What will not the prejudices and corrupt Intereſts of men carry them out into? God will for ever preſerve thoſe that are his, in an abhorrency of that Religion, be it what it will, that by any means leads unto an underva-

dervaluation of that Revelation of himſelf, which in infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs he hath made unto us.

But is it becauſe there is *no Reaſon* to be given of this evil from the minds of men themſelves, that it is thus aſcribed unto God? May not as well all the wickedneſſes that the world is filled withall be aſcribed unto him and what he hath done? Doth not each one ſee a *ſufficient cauſe* hereof even in himſelf, if he were not delivered from it by the power of the Spirit and grace of God? Do not other men who fail in the right Knowledge of God, eſpecially in any important Truths, ſufficiently evidence in other things, that the root of this matter is in themſelves? Alas! how dark are the minds of poor mortals, how full of Pride and Folly? I ſhall ſay with ſome confidence, he who underſtands not that there is reaſon enough to charge all the Errours, Ignorance and Confuſions in Religion, that are, or ever were in the world, without the leaſt cenſure of obſcurity, inſufficiency or intricacy in the Scripture, *on the minds of men*, and thoſe depraved affections whoſe prevalency they are obnoxious unto, are themſelves profoundly ignorant of the ſtate of all things above and here below.

We must therefore enquire after the Causes and Reasons of these things among our selves, for there only they will be found.

And these Causes are of two sorts, (1.) *That which is general*, and the spring of all others; (2.) *Those which are particular* that arise and branch themselves from thence.

The first and general cause of all ignorance, error and misunderstanding of the mind and will of God, as revealed in the scripture, among all sorts of men, whatever there particular circumstances are, is the *Natural vanity and darkness with which the minds of all men are depraved.* The nature of this Depravation of our minds by the fall, and the effects of it, I have fully else where declared. Wherefore I now take it for granted that the minds of all men are naturally prepossessed with this darkeness and vanity, from whence they are not, from whence they cannot be delivered but by the saving illumination of the Spirit and grace of God. But because I have so largely treated of it both in the *discourses of the dispensation of the Spirit.* Book 3. *Chap.* 3. As also in those concerning the *Apostacy of these latter times*, I shall not again insist upon it.

Two

Two things I ſhall only obſerve unto our preſent purpoſe, namely (1.) *That hereby the mind is kept off from diſcerning the Glory and Beauty of Spiritual heavenly truth*, and from being ſenſible of its power and efficacy, *Joh.* 1. 5. (2.) That it is by the ſame means *enclined unto all things that are Vain, Curious, Superſtitious, Carnal*, ſuited unto the intereſt of Pride, Luſt and all manner of corrupt affections. Hence what ever other occaſions of error and Superſtition may be given or taken, the ground of their reception, and of all adherence unto them, is the *uncured vanity and darkneſs* of the minds of men by nature. This is the mire wherein this ruſh doth grow.

And the conſideration hereof will rectifie our thoughts concerning thoſe whom we ſee daily to *wander from the Truth*, or to live in thoſe miſapprehenſions of the Mind of God which they have imbibed, notwithſtanding the clear Revelation of it unto the contrary. Some think it ſtrange that it ſhould be ſo, and marvel at them: Some are angry with them, and ſome would perſecute and deſtroy them. We may make a better uſe of this conſideration; for we may learn from it the *ſad*

corruption and depravation of our minds in our eſtate of Apoſtacy from God. Here lies the ſeed and ſpring of all the ſin, evil and diſorder which we behold and ſuffer under in Religious concerns in this world. And if we conſider it aright, it will ſerve

1. To impreſs *a due ſenſe of our own condition upon our minds*, that we may be humbled. And in *Humility* alone there is ſafety. *His ſoul which is lifted up is not upright in him*, *Hab.* 2.4. for he *draws back from God*, and God hath no pleaſure in him, as the Apoſtle expounds thoſe words, *Heb.* 10. 38. It was in the principles of our nature to adhere ſacredly unto the *firſt Truth*, to diſcern and abhor every falſe way: We were created with that *Light of Truth* in our minds, as was every way able to guide us in all that we had to believe or do, with reſpect unto God, or our own bleſſedneſs for ever. But in the room thereof, through our wretched *Apoſtacy from God*, our mind is become the ſeat and habitation of all vanity, diſorder and confuſion. And no way doth this more diſcover it ſelf then in the readineſs and proneneſs of multitudes to embrace whatever is crooked, perverſe and falſe in Religion, notwithſtanding the *clear Revelation* that

that God hath made of the whole Truth concerning it in the Scripture. A due reflection hereon may teach us *Humility* and ſelf-abaſement. For we are by nature children of wrath even as others; neither have we any good thing that we have not received. It is better therefore to be converſant with ſuch thoughts on this occaſion, then to be filled with *contempt of*, or *wrath againſt* thoſe whom we ſee yet ſuffering under thoſe woful effects of the general *Apoſtaſie* from God, wherein we were equally involved with them. Yea,

2. It will teach us *Pity and Compaſſion* towards thoſe whoſe minds do run out into the ſpiritual exceſſes mentioned. The merciful High Prieſt of the whole Church *hath compaſſion on the ignorant, and them that wander out of the way*, *Heb.* 5.2. and it is conformity unto him in all things, which ought to be our principal deſign, if we deſire to be like unto him in glory. Want hereof is the ruine of Religion, and the true cauſe of all the troubles that its profeſſion is encumbred withall at this day.

It is true, for the moſt part there is an interpoſition of corrupt affections ſeducing the minds of men from the Truth. With theſe are they toſſed up and down, and

ſo

ſo driven with the winds of temptations that befall them. But is it *Humanity* to ſtand on the ſhoar, and ſeeing men in a *ſtorm* at Sea wherein they are ready every moment to be caſt away, and periſh, to *ſtorm* at them our ſelves, or to ſhoot them to death, or to caſt fire into their veſſel, becauſe they are in danger of being drowned? Yet no otherwiſe do we deal with them whom we perſecute, becauſe they miſs the knowledge of the Truth, and it may be raiſe a worſe *ſtorm* in our ſelves as to our own *morals*, then they ſuffer under in their *Intellectuals*. Concerning ſuch perſons the advice of the Apoſtle is, *Of ſome have compaſſion making a difference, and others ſave with fear, pulling them out of the fire*, *Jude* 22. 23. Some are ſo given up in their Apoſtaſie, as that they *ſin unto death*, with ſuch we are not to concern our ſelves, 1 *Joh.* 5. 16. But it is very rare that we can ſafely make that judgment concerning any in this world. Sometimes no doubt we may, or this Rule concerning them had never been given. As unto all others, the worſt of them, thoſe that *are in the fire*, the frame of our minds acting towards them, are here preſented unto us; compaſſion of their preſent ſtate and *fear* of their

their future ruine, we ought to be poſſeſſed with, and acted by. But how few are they who are ſo framed and minded towards them, eſpecially ſuch as by their enormous Errours ſeem to be fallen into the fire of Gods diſpleaſure? Anger, wrath, fury, contempt towards ſuch perſons, men think to be their duty; more contrivances there are uſually how they may be *temporally deſtroyed*, then how they may be *eternally ſaved*. But ſuch men profeſs the Truth as it were by chance. They never knew what it is to learn it aright, nor whence the knowledge of it is to be received, nor were ever under its power or conduct. Our proper work is to *ſave ſuch perſons* what lies in us, *pulling them out of the fire*. Duties of difficulty and danger unto our ſelves may be required hereunto: It is eaſier if we had ſecular power with us to thruſt men into *temporal fire* for their errors, then to free them from *eternal fire* by the Truth. But if we were governed with compaſſion for their ſouls, and fear of their ruine, as it is our duty to be, we would not decline any office of love required thereunto.

3. Hath God *lead us into the Truth*, hath he kept us from every falſe way, it is evident that we have abundant cauſe of gratitude

titude and fruitfulneſs. It is a condition more deſperate than that of the moſt pernicious Errours, to *hold the Truth in unrighteouſneſs*; and as good not know the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as to be barren in the knowledge of him. It is not, we ſee, of *our ſelves*, that we either know the Truth, or love it, or abide in the profeſſion of it. We have nothing of this kind but what we have received, *Humility* in our ſelves, *Uſefulneſs* towards others, and *Thankfulneſs* unto God, ought to be the effect of this conſideration.

This is the firſt general cauſe of mens miſapprehenſion of the Mind and Will of God as revealed in the Scripture. The Revelation it ſelf is plain, perſpcuous and full of light. *But this Light ſhineth into Darkneſs, and the Darkneſs comprehendeth it not.* The natural Darkneſs and Blindneſs which is in the minds of men, with the vanity and inſtability which they are attended with, cauſeth them to wreſt the Scriptures unto their own deſtruction. And for this ſort of men to complain, as they do horribly in the *Papacy*, of the obſcurity of the Scriptnre, is all one as if a company of blind men ſhould cry out of an *Eclipſe of the Sun*, when he ſhineth in his

his full ſtrength and glory. How this Darkneſs is removed and taken away by the Effectual Operation of the Holy Spirit in our Illumination, I have elſewhere at large diſcourſed.

2. *Corrupt Affections* prevalent in the minds of men do hinder them from a right underſtanding of the Mind of God in the Scripture. For hereby are they effectually enclined to wreſt and pervert the Truth, or are filled with prejudices againſt it. This is the *next Cauſe* of all Ignorance and Errour, where we muſt ſeek for the particular Cauſes of them before propoſed. The principal Reaſon why the generality of men attain not a right underſtanding of the Mind and Will of God in the Scripture, is the *corrupt affections* that are predominant in their own minds, whereby they are expoſed unto all ſorts of impreſſions and ſeductions from Satan and the Agents for his Kingdom and Intereſt. So the Apoſtle tells us, that *unlearned and unſtable men do wreſt the Scripture unto their own deſtruction*, 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. And another that theſe *unlearned and unſtable perſons, are men of corrupt minds*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 5. 2 *Tim.* 3. 8. that is, ſuch whoſe minds are peculiarly under the power of perverſe and corrupt affections.

affections. For these affections are θελήματα τ διανοίας, *Ephes.* 2. 3. The *wills of the mind*, such as carry it with an impetuous inclination towards their own satisfaction, and such as render it obstinate and perverse in its adherence thereunto. These are the Root of that *filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness* which must be cast out before we can *receive the ingrafted word with meekness*, *Jam.* 1. 11. Some few of them may be named.

1. *Pride or carnal confidence* in our own Wisdom and Ability of mind for all the ends of our Duty towards God, and this in especial of understanding his Mind and Will, either keeps the souls of men under the bondage of Darkness and Ignorance, or precipitates them into foolish apprehensions or pernicious Errours. As spiritual Pride is the worst sort of Pride, so this is the worst degree of Spiritual Pride, namely, when men do not acknowledge God in these things as they ought, but lean unto their own understandings. This is that which ruined the *Pharisees* of old, that they could not understand the Mind of God in any thing unto their advantage. It is the *Meek*, the *Humble*, the *Lowly in mind*, those that are *like little Children*, that God hath

hath promiſed to teach. This is an eternal and unalterable Law of Gods Appointment, that whoever will learn his Mind and Will as revealed in the Scripture, muſt be *humble* and *lowly*, renouncing all truſt and confidence in themſelves. And whatever men of another frame do come to know, they know it not according to the Mind of God, nor according to their own Duty, nor unto their Advantage. Whatever *Knowledge* they may have, however *conſpicuous* it may be made by their natural and *acquired Abilities*, however it may be garniſhed with a mixture of ſecular literature, whatever contempt it may raiſe them unto of others, ſuch as the *Phariſees* had of the *People*, whom they eſteemed *accurſed becauſe they knew not the Law*, yet they knew nothing as they ought, nothing unto the glory of God, nothing to the Spiritual Advantage of their own ſouls; and wherein is their knowledge to be accounted of? Indeed the knowledge of a proud man, is the Throne of Satan in his mind: To ſuppoſe that perſons under the predominancy of Pride, ſelf conceit and ſelf-confidence, can underſtand the Mind of God as revealed in a due manner, is to renounce the Scripture or innumerable poſitive Teſtimonies

monies given in them unto the contrary, ſuch Perſons cannot make uſe of any one means of Spiritual Knowledge that God requires of them in a way of Duty, nor improve any one Truth which they may know unto their Good. Therefore our Saviour tells the proud *Phariſees*, notwithſtanding all their skill in the *Letter* and *Tittles* of the Scripture, *That they had not heard the voice of God at any time, nor ſeen his ſhape, neither had they his Word abiding in them*, Joh. 5. 37, 38. They had no right knowledge of him, as he had revealed and declared himſelf.

Men infected with this *Leaven* having their Minds tainted with it, have been the great corrupters of Divine Truth, in all Ages. Such have been the Ringleaders of all *Hereſies*, and ſuch were they, who have turned the Knowledge of the Will of God propoſed in the Scripture, into a *wrangling ſcience* filled with niceties, ſubtilties, curioſities, *futilous termes of Art*, and other fuel for the minds of fiery contenders in wrangling diſputations.

And this kind of *ſelf-confidence* is apt to befall all ſorts of Men. Thoſe of the meaneſt capacity may be infected with it, no leſs then the wiſeſt or moſt learned. And

And we frequently ſee Perſons, whoſe weakneſs in all ſound knowledge, and inſufficiency for the uſe of proper means unto the attaining of it, might ſeem to call them unto *Humility and lowlineſs of Mind* in an eminent manner, yet lifted up unto ſuch a degree of *Spiritual Pride* and conceit of their own Underſtandings, as to render them uſeleſs, troubleſome, and offenſive unto men of ſober Minds. But principally, are they expoſed hereunto, who either really, or in their own apprehenſions are *exalted above others* in ſecular Learning, and natural or acquired Abilities. For ſuch men are apt to think that they muſt needs know the meaning of the Holy Ghoſt in the Scriptures better then others, or at leaſt, that they can do ſo, if they will but ſet themſelves about it. But that which principally hinders them from ſo doing, is their conceit that ſo they do. They miſtake that for divine Knowledge which is in them the great *obſtruction* of it.

2. The *Love of Honour and Praiſe among men* is another corrupt Affection of mind of the ſame nature and efficacy with that before named. This is ſo branded by our Saviour as an inſuperable obſtacle againſt the admiſſion of *Sacred Light* and

monies given in them unto the contrary. Such Persons cannot make use of any one means of Spiritual Knowledge that God requires of them in a way of Duty, nor improve any one Truth which they may know unto their Good. Therefore our Saviour tells the proud *Pharisees*, notwithstanding all their skill in the *Letter* and *Tittles* of the Scripture, *That they had not heard the voice of God at any time, nor seen his shape, neither had they his Word abiding in them*, Joh. 5. 37, 38. They had no right knowledge of him, as he had revealed and declared himself.

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Truth, that no more need be added thereunto, ſee *Joh.* 5. 44. chap. 12. 43.

Thirdly, *a Pertinacious adherence unto corrupt Traditions, and inveterate Errors* quite ſhuts up the way unto all Wiſdom and Spiritual Underſtanding. This ruined the Church of the *Jews* of old, and makes at preſent that of the *Romaniſts* incurable. What their fore-fathers have profeſſed, what themſelves have imbibed from their infancy, what all their outward circumſtances are involved in, what they have advantage by, what is in Reputation with thoſe in whom they are principally concerned, that ſhall be the *Truth* with them and nothing elſe. Unto perſons whoſe minds are wholly vitiated with the Leaven of this corrupt Affection; there is not a line in the Scripture whoſe ſenſe can be truly and clearly repreſented. All appears in the colour and figure that their prejudices frame in their Minds. When the Lord Chriſt came forth firſt unto the Preaching of the Goſpel, there *came a voice from Heaven ſaying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed, hear him:* Math. 17. 5. Neither was this Command given unto them alone who heard it immediatly from the *excellent Glory*, as *Peter* ſpeaks,

2 *Pet.*

2 *Pet.* 1. 17. but as Recorded in the Word, is given equally unto every one, that would learn any thing of the Mind and Will of God in a due manner. No man can learn but by the *hearing of him*; unto him are we ſent for the learning of our Spiritual Knowledge. And no other way doth he ſpeak unto us but by his Word and Spirit. But where the minds of Men are prepoſſeſſed with apprehenſions of what they have received from the Authority of other Teachers, they have neither Deſire, Deſign, Readineſs, nor Willingneſs to hear *him*. But if men will not forego all præimbibed Opinions, prejudices and conceptions of Mind however rivited into them by Traditions, Cuſtome, Veneration of Elders, and ſecular Advantages, to hearken unto and receive whatever he ſhall ſpeak unto them, and that with an humble, lowly frame of Heart, they will never learn the Truth, nor attain *a full aſſurance of Underſtanding* in the myſteries of God. Theſe inveterate Prejudices, are at this day thoſe which principally ſhut out the Truth, and ſet men together by *the ears* all the World over about Religion and the concerns thereof. Hence is all the Strife, Rage, Tumult, and Perſecution that the World is filled withal.

Could men but once agree to lay down all those Presumptions which either Wit or Learning, or Custome, or Interest and Advantage have influenced them withal, at the feet of Jesus Christ, and resolve in sincerity to comply with that alone which he doth teach them, and to forego whatever is inconsistent therewith, the waies unto *Truth and Peace* would be more laid open then otherwise they are like to be.

Fourthly, *Spiritual Sloth* is of the same nature, and produceth the same Effect. The Scripture frequently giveth us in charge to use the utmost of our diligence in the *search* of, and for the finding out of Spiritual Truth, proposing unto us the example of those that have done so before, *Jos.* 1. 8. *Psal.* 1. 1. *Prov.* 2. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. *Joh.* 5. 39. 1 *Pet.* 1. 11, 12. And any rational man would judge that if it had not been so expresly given us in charge from God himself, if it had not been a means appointed and sanctified unto this End, yet that the *nature of the thing* it self, with its importance unto our Duty and Blessedness, are sufficient to convince us of its necessity. It is *Truth*, it is *Heavenly Truth* we enquire after; that

that, on the Knowledge or Ignorance whereof, our Eternal Bleſſedneſs or Miſery doth depend. And in a due perception thereof alone, are the faculties of our minds perfected according to the meaſure which they are capable of in this life. Therein alone can the mind of man find reſt, peace and ſatisfaction, and without it muſt alwaies wander in reſtleſs uncertainties, and diſquieting vanities. It is a notion implanted on the minds of all men, that all *Truth lies deep*, and that there is great difficulty in the attainment of it. The minds of moſt are impoſed on by ſpecious appearances of falſhood. Wherefore all wiſe men have agreed that *without our utmoſt care and diligence* in the Inveſtigation of the Truth, we muſt be contented to walk in the ſhades of Ignorance and Error. And if it be thus in earthly things, how much more is it ſo in heavenly? As ſpiritual *ſupernatural Truth* is incomparably to be valued above that which relates unto things natural; ſo it is more obſtruſe, and of a more difficult inveſtigation. But this *folly* is befallen the minds of the generality of men, that of all things they ſuppoſe there is leaſt need of pains and diligence to be uſed in an enquiry after thoſe things

which *the Angels themſelves deſire to bow down and look into*, and which the Prophets of old enquired and ſearched after with all diligence. Whatever be their notion hereof, yet practically it is evident, that moſt men through *Pride* and *Sloth*, and *love of Sin*, are wholly negligent herein. At leaſt they will not apply themſelves to thoſe Spiritual Means, without the uſe whereof the knowledge of *Divine Truth* will not be attained. It is generally ſuppoſed that men may be as wiſe in theſe things as they need to be, at a very eaſy rate. The folly of men herein can never be enough bewailed; they regard Spiritual Truth as if they had no concernment in it, beyond what Cuſtom and Tradition puts them on, in reading Chapters, or hearing Sermons: They are wholly under the power of *Sloth*, as unto any means of Spiritual Knowledge.

Some indeed will labour diligently in the ſtudy of thoſe things which the Scripture hath in common with other *Arts and Sciences*; ſuch are the Languages wherein it was writ, the Stories contained in it, the waies of arguing which it uſeth with *Scholaſtical Accuracy* in expreſſing the Truth ſuppoſed to be contained in it. Theſe things

things are great in themſelves, but go for nothing when they are alone. Men under the utmoſt efficacy of *Spiritual Sloth* may be diligent in them, and make a great progreſs in their improvement. But they are Spiritual Objects and Duties that this Sloth prevails to alienate the minds of men from, and make them negligent of; and what are thoſe Duties I ſhall afterwards manifeſt.

The conſideration I ſay of the ſtate of things in the world. gives ſo great an evidence of probability, that, what through the *Pride and Self-conceit* of the minds of many, refuſing a compliance with the Means of Spiritual Knowledge, and excluding all gracious qualifications indiſpenſibly required unto the attaining of it. What through the *power of corrupt Traditions*, impriſoning the minds of men in a fatal adherence unto them, preventing all thoughts of an holy ingenious enquiry into the Mind of God, by the only ſafe infallible Revelation of it; and what *through the power of Spiritual Sloth* indiſpoſing the minds of the moſt unto an immediate ſearch of the Scripture; partly with apprehenſions of its difficulty, and notions of learning the Truth contained in it by other

means; and what through a *Traditional course of ſtudying Divinity*, as an Art or Science to be learned out of the Writings of Men; the number is very ſmall of them who diligently, humbly, and conſcientiouſly endeavour to learn the Truth from the voice of God in the Scripture, or to grow wiſe in the Myſteries of the Goſpel by ſuch waies as wherein alone that Wiſdom is attainable. And is it any wonder, if many, the greateſt number of men, wander after vain imaginations of their own or others, whilſt the Truth is neglected or deſpiſed?

5. Again, there is in the minds of men by nature a *Love of Sin*, which cauſeth them to *hate the Truth*; and none can underſtand it but thoſe that love it. In the Viſible Church moſt men come to know of the Truth of the Goſpel as it were whether they will or no. And the general deſign of it they find to be a *ſeparation between them and their ſins*. This ſets them at a diſtance from it in affection, whereon they can never make any near approach unto it in knowledge or underſtanding. So we are aſſured, *Joh.* 3. 19, 20. *Light is come into the world, and men love Darkneſs rather then Light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*

evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh unto the Light leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved. Perſons under the power of this frame take up under the ſhades of ignorance, and corrupt imaginations. And if they ſhould attempt to learn the Truth, they would never be able ſo to do.

Laſtly, Satan by his temptations and ſuggeſtions doth variouſly affect the minds of men, hindering them from diſcerning the Mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. *The God of this world blinds the eyes of them that believe not, leſt the Light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt who is the Image of God ſhould ſhine unto them,* 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. The waies and means whereby he doth ſo, the inſtruments which he uſeth, the Artifices and methods which he applieth unto his ends, with his application of himſelf unto them according unto all occaſions, circumſtances, opportunities, and provocations in great variety, were worth our enquiring into, but that we ſhould too much digreſs from our preſent deſign.

I have but mentioned theſe things, and that as *Inſtances* of the true original cauſes of the want of underſtanding, and miſunderſtanding of the Revelation of the Mind

of

of God in the Scripture. Many more of the ſame nature might be added unto them, and their effectual operations unto the ſame end, be declared. But the mention of them here is only *occaſional*, and ſuch as will not admit of a farther diſcuſſion. But by theſe and the like depraved affections it is, that the *Original Darkneſs* and enmity of the minds of men againſt Spiritual Truth, and all the Myſteries of it do exert themſelves; and from them do all the Errour, Superſtition, and falſe Worſhip that the world is filled withall, proceed. For

Whilſt the minds of men are thus affected, as they cannot underſtand and receive Divine Spiritual Truths, in a due manner, ſo are they ready and prone to embrace whatever is contrary thereunto. If therefore it be the work of the Spirit of God alone in the Renovation of our minds to free them from the power of theſe *vicious depraved habits*, and conſequently the advantages that Satan hath againſt them thereby, there is an eſpecial work of his neceſſary to enable us to learn the Truth as we ought. And for thoſe who have no regard unto theſe things, who ſuppoſe that in the ſtudy of the Scripture all things come alike unto all, to the clean, and to the

the unclean, to the humble and the proud, to them that hate the garments ſpotted with the fleſh, and thoſe that both love ſin, and live in it, they ſeem to know nothing either of the deſign, nature, power, uſe or end of the Goſpel.

The removal of theſe hinderances and obſtacles is the work of the Spirit of God alone. For

1. He alone communicates that *Spiritual Light* unto our minds, which is the foundation of all our relief againſt theſe obſtacles of, and oppoſitions unto a ſaving underſtanding of the Mind of God.

2. In particular he freeth, delivereth, and purgeth our minds from all thoſe *corrupt affections* and prejudices, which are partly inbred in them, partly aſſumed by them, or impoſed on them. For the Artifice of Satan in turning the minds of men from the Truth, is by bringing them under the power of corrupt and vicious habits, which expel that frame of ſpirit which is indiſpenſibly neceſſary unto them that would learn it. It is indeed our *Duty* ſo to purifie and purge our ſelves. We are to caſt out all *filthineſs and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs*, that we *may receive the ingrafted Word with meekneſs*, *Jam.* 1. 21. *To purge our*

our ſelves from theſe things, that we may be veſſels unto honour ſanctified and meet for our Maſters uſe, and unto every good work, 2 *Tim.* 2. 21. If it be not thus with us, let the pride and folly of men pretend what they pleaſe, we can neither learn, nor know, nor teach the Mind of God as we ought. And what men may do without giving glory unto God, or the bringing of any ſpiritual advantage unto their own ſouls, we enquire not, ſeeing it belongeth only *equivocally* unto Chriſtian Religion. But although it is our Duty thus to *purge our ſelves*, yet is it by *the Grace of the Holy Spirit* that ſo we do. Thoſe who under a pretence of our own Duty would exclude in any thing the efficacious operations of the Holy Ghoſt; or on the other hand, on the pretence of his Grace and its efficacy, would exclude the neceſſity of diligence in our duties; do admit but of one half of the Goſpel, rejecting the other. The whole Goſpel aſſerts and requireth them both unto every good act and work. Wherefore the *purging of our ſelves* is that which is not abſolutely in the power of our natural abilities. For theſe corrupt affections poſſeſs, and are predominant in the mind it ſelf, and all its actings are ſuited unto their

their nature, and influenced by their power. It can never therefore by its own native ability free it ſelf from them. But it is the work of this great Purifier and Sanctifier of the Church, to free our minds from theſe corrupt affections, and inveterate prejudices, whereby we are alienated from the Truth, and inclined unto all falſe conceptions of the Mind of God. And unleſs this be done, in vain ſhall we think to learn the Truth as it is in *Jeſus*. See 1 *Cor.* 6. 11. *Tit.* 3. 3, 4. *Rom.* 8. 13. *Epheſ.* 4. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

3. He implants in our minds *Spiritual Habits and Principles* contrary and oppoſite unto thoſe corrupt affections, whereby they are ſubdued and expelled. By him are our minds made *humble*, *meek*, and *teachable*, through a ſubmiſſion unto the authority of the Word, and a conſcientious endeavour to conform our ſelves thereunto.

It was alwaies agreed that there were ordinarily preparations required unto the receiving of Divine Illuminations; and in the aſſignation of them many have been greatly deceived. Hence ſome in the expectation of receiving *Divine Revelations*, have been impoſed on by *diabolical Deluſions*,

ſions, which by the working of their imaginations they had prepared their minds to give an eaſie admiſſion unto. So was it among the Heathen of old, who had invented many waies unto this purpoſe, ſome of them horrid and dreadful. And ſo it is ſtill with *all Enthuſiaſts*. But God himſelf hath plainly declared what are the *Qualifications* of thoſe ſouls, which are meet to be made partakers of Divine Teachings, or ever ſhall be ſo. And theſe are, as they are frequently expreſſed, *meekneſs*, *humility*, *godly fear*, *reverence*, *ſubmiſſion of ſoul and conſcience* unto the Authority of God, with a *Reſolution* and readineſs for and unto all that obedience which he requireth of us, eſpecially that which is internal in the hidden man of the heart. It may be ſome will judge that we wander very far from the matter of our enquiry; namely, *how we may come unto the Knowledge of the Mind of God in the Scripture*, or we may aright underſtand the Scripture, when we aſſign theſe things as means thereof, or preparations thereunto. For although theſe are good things, (for that cannot be denied) yet it is *ridiculous* to urge them as neneceſſary unto this end, or of any uſe for the attaining of it. Learning, Arts, Tongues, Sciences,

Sciences, with the Rules of their exerciſe, and the advantage of *Eccleſiaſtical Dignity*, are the things that are of uſe herein, and they alone. The moſt of theſe things and ſundry other of the ſame kind, we acknowledge to be of great uſe unto the end deſigned, in their proper place, and what is the due uſe of them ſhall be afterwards declared. But we muſt not forgo what the Scripture plainly inſtructeth us in, and which the nature of the things themſelves doth evidence to be neceſſary, to comply with the arrogance and fancy of any, or to free our ſelves from their contempt.

It is ſuch an underſtanding of the Scripture, of the *Divine Revelation* of the Mind of God therein, as wherein the Spiritual Illumination of our minds doth conſiſt, which we enquire after; ſuch a knowledge as is uſeful and profitable unto the proper ends of the Scripture towards us, that which we are taught of God, that we may live unto him. Theſe are the ends of all true knowledge. See 2 *Tim.* 3. 14,15,16,17. And for this end the furniſhment of the mind with the graces before mentioned is the beſt preparation. He bids defiance unto the Goſpel by whom it is denied. *God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.*

humble. Whatever be the parts or abilities of men, whatever diligence they may uſe in the inveſtigation of the Truth, whatever *diſciplinary* knowledge they may attain thereby, the Spirit of God never did, nor ever will, inſtruct *a proud unhumbled ſoul* in the right knowledge of the Scripture as it is a Divine Revelation. It is by theſe *gracious Qualifications alone* whereby we may be enabled to caſt out all filthineſs and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs ſo as to receive the ingrafted Word with meekneſs, which is able to ſave our ſouls.

Our bleſſed Saviour tells us, *that unleſs we be converted, and become as little Children, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, Mat.* 18. 3. We cannot do ſo, unleſs we become *humble, meek, tender, weaned from high thoughts of our ſelves*, and are purged from prejudices by corrupt affections. And I value not that knowledge which will not conduct us into the *Kingdom of Heaven*, or which ſhall be thence excluded. So God hath promiſed that *the meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way; the ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will ſhew them his Covenant; And what man is he that feareth the Lord, him ſhall he teach in the*

the way, *Pſal.* 25. 9, 12, 14. And ſo we are told plainly that *evil men underſtand not Judgement*, *but they that fear the Lord underſtand all things*, Prov. 28. 5.

Now all theſe Graces whereby men are made teachable, capable of divine myſteries, ſo as to *learn the truth as it is in Jeſus*, to underſtand the mind of God in the Scriptures, are wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, & belong unto his work upon our minds in our illumination. Without this the *Hearts* of all men are *fat*, their *ears heavy*, and their *eyes ſealed*, that they can neither hear, nor perceive nor underſtand the myſteries of the Kingdom of God.

Theſe things belong unto the work of the Holy Spirit upon our minds: (as alſo ſundry other inſtances might be given unto the ſame purpoſe) in our illumination, or his enabling of us rightly to underſtand the mind of God in the Scripture. But whereas whoever is thus by him *graciouſly prepared* and diſpoſed, ſhall be taught in the knowledge of the will of God, ſo far as he is concerned to know it in point of Duty, if ſo be he abide in the ordinary uſe of outward means, ſo there are ſundry other things neceſſary unto the attaining of further uſeful degrees of this knowledge and

underſtanding: whereof I ſhall treat afterwards.

CHAP. VI.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Compoſing and Diſpoſal of the Scripture as a means of ſacred illumination; the Perſpicuity of the Scripture unto the underſtanding of the mind of God declared and vindicated.

THere is yet another part of the work of the Holy Spirit with reſpect unto the *Illumination* of our minds, which muſt alſo be enquired into. And this concerneth the *Scripture* it ſelf. For this he hath ſo given out, and ſo diſpoſed of, as that it ſhould be a moral way or means for the communication of *Divine Revelations* unto the minds of men. For this alſo is an effect of his infinite wiſdome and care of the Church deſigning to enlighten our minds with the knowledge of God, he prepared apt Inſtruments for that end. That therefore which we ſhall declare on this Head of our Diſcourſe is, That *the Holy*

Holy Spirit of God hath prepared and disposed of the Scripture, so, as it might be a most sufficient and absolutely perfect way and means of communicating unto our minds that saving knowledge of God and his will which is needful that we may live unto him, and come unto the enjoyment of him in his Glory. And here sundry things must be observed.

1. The Holy Spirit hath not in the Scripture reduced and *disposed its Doctrines or supernatural Truths into any Systeme, Order or Method.* Into such a method are the principal of them disposed in our *Catechisms* and *Systemes of Divinity, Creeds*, and *Confessions of Faith.* For whereas the doctrinal Truths of the Scripture have a mutual respect unto, and dependence on one another, they may be disposed into such an order to help the understandings and memories of men. There is indeed in some of the *Epistles of Paul*, especially that unto the *Romans* a methodical disposition of the most important Doctrines of the Gospel. And from thence are the best methods of our Teaching borrowed. But *in the whole Scripture* there is no such thing aimed at. It is not distributed into *Common Places*, nor are all things concerning the same Truth *methodically* disposed

under the ſame Head: but its contexture and frame is quite of another nature. From this conſideration ſome think they have an advantage to charge the Scripture with *obſcurity*: and do thereon maintain that it was never intended to be ſuch a *Revelation of Doctrines* as ſhould be the rule of our Faith. Had it been ſo, the Truths to be believed would have been propoſed in ſome order unto us, as a *Creed*, or *Confeſſion* of Faith, that we might at once have had a view of them, and been acquainted with them. But whereas they are now left to be gathered out of a *Collection of Hiſtories*, *Propheſies*, *Prayers*, *Songs*, *Letters* or *Epiſtles*, ſuch as the Bible is compoſed of, they are difficult to be found, hard to be underſtood, and never perfectly to be learned. And doubtleſs the way fancied would have been excellent had God deſigned to effect in us, only an *Artificial* or *Methodical Faith* and obedience. But if we have a due regard unto the *uſe of the Scripture* and the ends of God therein, there is no weight in this objection. For

1. It is evident that the whole of it conſiſts in the *Advancement of mens own Apprehenſions* and imaginations againſt the Will

Will and Wiſdome of God. It is a ſufficient Reaſon to prove this the *Abſolute beſt way* for the diſpoſal of divine Revelations, becauſe God hath made uſe of this and no other. One indeed is reported to have ſaid, that had he been *preſent at the Creation of the Univerſe, he would have diſpoſed ſome things into a better order, than what they are in.* For vain man would be wiſe, though he be like the wild Aſſes Colt. And no *wiſer* or better are the thoughts, that the Revelation of ſupernatural truths, might have been *otherwiſe diſpoſed of* with reſpect unto the end of God, then as they are in the Scripture. God puts not ſuch value upon mens *accurate methods* as they may imagine them to deſerve. Nor are they ſo ſubſervient unto his ends in the Revelation of himſelf, as they are apt to fancy (yea, oft times when as they ſuppoſe they have brought Truths unto the *ſtricteſt propriety of expreſſion*, they loſe both their Power and their Glory. Hence is the World filled with ſo many *lifeleſs*, *ſapleſs*, *graceleſs*, artificial declarations of divine Truth in the *Schoolmen* and others. We may ſooner ſqueeze water out of a pumice ſtone, then one drop of Spiritual nouriſhment out of them. But how many

millions of Souls have received divine Light and conſolation ſuited unto their condition in thoſe *occaſional occurrences* of truth which they meet withall in the Scripture, which they would never have obtained in thoſe wiſe *Artificial Diſpoſals of them* which ſome men would fancy. Truths have their power and efficacy upon our minds, not only from *themſelves*, but from their *poſiture* in the Scripture. There are they placed in ſuch *Aſpects* towards, in ſuch *conjunctions* one with another, as that their *influences* on our minds do greatly depend thereon. He is no *wiſe man*, nor exerciſed in thoſe things, who would part with any one truth out of its proper place where the holy Spirit hath diſpoſed and fixed it. The *Pſalmiſt* ſaith of Gods teſtimonies, they are אנשי עצתו, *the men of his Counſel*, Pſal. 119. 24. And no man will make choice of a *Counſellor*, all whoſe wiſdom conſiſts in *ſayings* and *rules* caſt into a certain *Order* and *Method*. He alone is a good *Counſellor*, who out of the largeneſs and wiſdome of his own Heart and mind, can give advice according unto all preſent occaſions and circumſtances. Such Counſellors are the Teſtimonies of God. Artificial Methodizing of Spiritual Truths, may make men ready

ready in notions, cunning and ſubtle in diſputations, but it is the Scripture it ſelf that is able to *make us wiſe unto Salvation.*

2. In the writing and compoſing of the Holy Scripture, the Spirit of God had reſpect unto the *various ſtates and conditions of the Church.* It was not given for the uſe of one Age or Seaſon only, but for all Generations, for a Guide in Faith and Obedience from the beginning of the World to the end of it. And the ſtate of the Church was not always to be the ſame, neither in Light, Knowledge, nor Worſhip. God had ſo diſpoſed of things in the eternal Counſel of his Will, that it ſhould be carried on by various *degrees of divine Revelation* unto its perfect eſtate. Hereunto is the Revelation of his Mind in the Scripture ſubſervient and ſuited, *Heb.* 1. 1. If all divine Truths had from the firſt been ſtated and fixed in a *Syſteme of Doctrines*, the ſtate of the Church muſt have been always the ſame, which was contrary unto the whole deſign of divine wiſdome in thoſe things.

3. Such a *Syſtematical Propoſal of Doctrines*, Truths, or Articles of Faith as ſome require, would not have anſwered the great ends of the Scripture it ſelf.

All that can be ſuppoſed of benefit thereby, is only, that it would lead us more eaſily into a *Methodical comprehenſion* of the Truths ſo propoſed. But this we may attain and not be rendred one jot more *like unto God* thereby. The principal end of the Scripture is of another nature. It is to be get in the minds of men, Faith, Fear, Obedience and Reverence of God, to make them Holy and Righteous; and thoſe ſuch as have in themſelves various Weakneſſes, Temptations, and Inclinations unto the contrary, which muſt be obviated and ſubdued. Unto this end every Truth is diſpoſed of in the Scripture as it ought to be. If any expect that the Scripture ſhould be written with reſpect unto *Opinions*, *Notions*, and *Speculations*, to render men *skilfull* and cunning in them, able to talk and diſpute about *all things* and *nothing*, they are miſtaken. It is given us to make us *Humble*, *Holy*, *Wiſe* in Spiritual things, to direct us in our *Duties*, to relieve us againſt *Temptations*, to comfort us under *Troubles*, to make us to love God and to live unto him, in all that variety of Circumſtances, Occaſions, Temptations, Trials, Duties, which in this World we are called unto. Unto this end

there

there is a more glorious Power and efficacy in one *Epiſtle*, one *Pſalm*, one *Chapter*, then in all the writings of men, though they have their uſe alſo. He that hath not experience hereof, is a ſtranger unto the Power of God in the Scripture. Sometimes the deſign and ſcope of the place, ſometimes the circumſtances related unto, moſtly that *Spirit of Wiſdome and Holineſs* which evidenceth it ſelf in the whole, do effectually influence our minds. Yea ſometimes an *occaſional paſſage in a ſtory*, a word or expreſſion ſhall contribute more to excite Faith and Love in our Souls, then a Volume of learned Diſputations. It doth not *argue*, *ſyllogize*, or *allure* the mind; but *enlightens*, *perſwades*, *conſtrains* the Soul unto Faith and Obedience. This it is prepared for and ſuited unto.

4. The Diſpoſition of divine Revelations in the Scripture is *ſubſervient unto other ends* alſo of the Wiſdom of God towards the Church, ſome of them may be named.

1. *To render uſeful and neceſſary the great Ordinance of the Miniſtry.* God hath not deſigned to inſtruct and ſave his Church by any one outward Ordinance only. The ways and means of doing good unto us,

ſo

ſo as that all may iſſue in his own eternal Glory, are known unto infinite wiſdome only. The inſtitution of the whole *ſeries and complex* of divine Ordinances, is no otherwiſe to be accounted for but by a regard and ſubmiſſion thereunto. Who can deny but that God might both have inſtructed, ſanctified, and ſaved us, without the uſe of *ſome* or *all* of thoſe inſtitutions which he hath obliged us unto. His infinitely *wiſe Will* is the only reaſon of theſe things. And he will have every one of his Appointments on which he hath *put his name* to be honoured, ſuch is the *Miniſtry*. A means this is not *coordinate* with the Scripture, but *ſubſervient* unto it. And the great end of it is, that thoſe who are called thereunto, and are furniſhed with Gifts for the diſcharge of it, might diligently *ſearch the Scripture*, and teach others the Mind of God revealed therein. It was, I ſay, the Will of God, that the Church ſhould ordinarily be always under the conduct of ſuch a *Miniſtry*. And his will it is, that thoſe who are called thereunto, ſhould be furniſhed with *peculiar ſpiritual Gifts*, for the finding out and declaration of the Truths that are treaſured up in the Scripture, unto all the ends of

of divine Revelation. See *Ephes.* 4. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. 2 *Tim.* 3. 14, 15, 16, 17. The Scripture therefore is such a Revelation as doth suppose and make necessary this Ordinance of the Ministry, wherein and whereby God will also be Glorified. And it were well if the *nature and* Duties of this office were better *understood* then they seem to be. God hath accommodated the Revelation of himself in the Scripture with respect unto them. And those by whom the due discharge of this office is despised or neglected, do sin greatly against the Authority, Wisdom and Love of God. And those do no less by whom it is assumed, but not rightly understood, or not duly improved.

But it may be said, Why did not *the Holy Ghost dispose of all things so plainly in the Scripture, that every individual Person might have attained the knowledge of them without the use of this Ministry.* I answer, (1.) It is a proud and foolish thing to enquire for any Reasons of the ways and works of God, antecedent unto his own will. *He worketh all things according to the Counsel of his will*, Ephes. 1. 11. and therein are we to acquiesce. Yet we may see the Wisdom of *what he hath done.* As herein

herein (1.) He would glorifie his own Power, in working great effects by *vile weak means*, 1 *Cor.* 3. 7. 2 *Cor.* 4. 7. (2.) He did it to magnifie his Son Jeſus Chriſt in the communication of *Spiritual Gifts*, *Act.* 2. 33. *Epheſ.* 4. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. (3.) To ſhew that in and by the work of his Grace he deſigned not to deſtroy or contradict the faculties of our nature which at firſt he created; he would work on them, and work a change in them, by means ſuited unto their conſtitution and nature; which is done in the *Miniſtry* of the word, 2 *Cor.* 5. 18, 19, 20.

2. The *Diſpoſition of the Scripture* reſpects the Duty of all Believers in the exerciſe of their Faith and Obedience. They know that all their Light and direction, all their ſprings of ſpiritual ſtrength and conſolation are treaſured up in the Scripture. But in the unſpeakable variety of their occaſions, they know not *where every particular proviſion for theſe ends* is ſtored. Hence it is their Duty to *meditate on the word night and day*, to ſearch for Wiſdom as Silver, and to dig for it as for hidden treaſure, *that they may underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God*, *Prov.* 2. 3, 4, 5. And this being a Duty whereunto the exer-

ciſe

ciſe of all Grace is required, they are all improved thereby. The Soul which is hereby engaged unto conſtant converſe with God, will thrive more in that which is the proper end of the Scripture; namely, *the fear of the Lord*, then it could do under any other kind of Teaching.

3. *A continual ſearch into the whole Scripture, without a neglect of any part of it*, is hereby rendred neceſſary; And hereby are our Souls prepared on all occaſions, and influenced in the whole courſe of our obedience: For the whole and every part of the word is bleſſed unto our good, according to the Prayer of our Saviour. *Sanctifie them by thy truth, thy word is truth, Joh.* 17. 17. There is Power put forth in and by every part and parcel of it, unto our ſanctification. And there is ſuch a diſtribution of *uſeful Truths* through the whole, that every where we may meet with what is prepared for us, and ſuited unto our condition. It is to me no ſmall Argument of the *divine original of the Scripture*, and of the preſence of God in it, that there is no *Thought of our Hearts* with reſpect unto the proper end of the Scripture; that is, our living unto God, ſo as to come unto the enjoyment of him, but that we ſhall find

find at one time or other, a due *adjuſtment* of it therein in one place or other.

There can no *Frame* befall the Hearts of Believers, as unto Spiritual things, whether it be as unto their *thriving* or *decays*, but there is a diſpoſition of Spiritual Proviſion for it; and oft times we ſhall find it then opening it ſelf when we leaſt looked for it. *Powerful Inſtructions as unto our practice* do often ariſe out of circumſtances, occaſional words and expreſſions, all arguing an infinite wiſdom in their proviſion, whereunto every future occurrence was in open view from eternity, and a preſent divine efficacy in the words application of it ſelf unto our Souls. How often in the reading of it, do we meet with, and are as it were ſurprized with *gracious words*, that enlighten, quicken, comfort, endear, and engage our Souls? How often do we find Sin wounded, Grace encouraged, Faith excited, Love inflamed, and this in that endleſs variety of inward frames and outward occaſions, which we are liable unto? I ſhall ſay with confidence, that he never was acquainted with the *Excellency of the Scripture*, with its Power and Efficacy in any holy experience, who is capable of fancying that divine Revelations

tions might have been diſpoſed unto more Advantage with reſpect unto our living unto God. And theſe things are ſufficient for the removal of the Objection before mentioned.

Secondly, The Holy Spirit hath ſo diſpoſed of the Scripture, *that the Mind of God in all things concerning our Faith and Obedience, in the knowledge whereof our Illumination doth conſiſt, is clearly revealed therein.* There needs no other Argument to prove any thing *not to belong* unto our Religion, then that it is *not revealed*, or appointed in the Scripture; no other to prove any Truth not to be *indiſpenſably neceſſary* unto our Faith or Obedience, then that it is not *clearly revealed* in the Scripture. But in this Aſſertion we muſt take along with us theſe two ſuppoſitions.

1. That we look on the Scripture and receive it *not as the word of men*, but as it is indeed the *word of the living God.* If we look for that *perſpicuity* and *clearneſs* in the expreſſion of divine Revelation, which men endeavour to give unto the Declaration of their minds in things natural, by Artificial methods and order, by the Application of words and terms invented and diſpoſed of on purpoſe to accommodate what

what is ſpoken unto the common notions and Reaſonings of men, we may be miſtaken. Nor would it have become divine Wiſdom and Authority to have made uſe of ſuch methods, ways or Arts. There is that *plainneſs* and *perſpicuity* in it which becomes the Holy wiſe God to make uſe of, whoſe words are to be received with Reverence, with ſubmiſſion of Mind and Conſcience unto his Authority; and fervent Prayer that we may underſtand his Mind and do his Will. Thus all things are made plain unto the meaneſt Capacity; yet not ſo, but if the moſt wiſe and learned do not ſee the characters of infinite divine wiſdom on things that ſeem moſt obvious and moſt expoſed unto vulgar apprehenſions, they have no *true wiſdom* in them. In thoſe very *Foords* and appearing *Shallows* of this River of God, where the *Lamb* may wade, the *Elephant* may ſwim: Every thing in the Scripture is ſo plain as that the *meaneſt Believer* may underſtand all that belongs unto his Duty, or is neceſſary unto his happineſs; yet is nothing ſo plain, but that the wiſeſt of them all have Reaſon to adore the depths and ſtores of divine wiſdom in it. All apprehenſions of the obſcurity of the Scripture ariſe from one of thoſe two cauſes. 1. That

1. That the minds of men are prepoſſeſſed with *Opinions*, *Dogms*, *Principles*, and Practices in Religion, received by Tradition from their Fathers; or have vehement and corrupt inclinations, unto ſuch ways, practices and opinions, as ſuit their carnal Reaſon and Intereſt. It is no wonder if ſuch Perſons conceive the Scripture *dark and obſcure*. For they can neither find that in it which they moſt deſire, nor can underſtand what is revealed in it, becauſe oppoſite unto their prejudices, affections and intereſts. The deſign of the Scripture is to *deſtroy that frame of mind in them which they would have eſtabliſhed*. And no man is to look for *Light* in the Scripture, to give countenance unto his own *Darkneſs*.

2. It will appear *obſcure* unto all men who come to the reading and ſtudy of it in the *meer ſtrength of their own natural Abilities*. And it may be it is on this account that ſome have eſteemed *St.* Paul *one of the obſcureſt writers that ever they read*. Wherefore as a Book written in *Greek* or *Hebrew* muſt be obſcure unto them who have no skill in thoſe Languages; So will the Scripture be unto all, who are unfurniſhed with thoſe Spiritual preparations which are re-

quired unto the right underſtanding of it. For,

2. It is ſuppoſed when we aſſert the *clearneſs and perſpicuity* of the Scripture, that there is unto the underſtanding of it uſe made of that *Aid* and *Aſſiſtance* of the Spirit of God concerning which we do diſcourſe. Without this the *cleareſt Revelations* of divine ſupernatural things, will appear as wrapt up in Darkneſs and Obſcurity: not for want of *Light* in them, but for want of *Light* in us. Wherefore by aſſerting the neceſſity of ſupernatural Illumination, for the right underſtanding of divine Revelation, we no way impeach the *perſpicuity* of the Scripture. All things wherein our Faith and Obedience are concerned are clearly declared therein; Howbeit when all is done, *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, nor can know them*, until the eyes of his underſtanding be enlightened.

3. The Holy Spirit hath ſo diſpoſed the Scripture, that notwithſtanding that *perſpicuity* which is in the whole with reſpect unto its proper end, yet are there in ſundry parts or paſſages of it: (1.) τινα δυσνοητα, ſome things *hard to be underſtood*: and (2.) τινα δυσερμηνευτα, ſome things hard

hard to be *uttered or interpreted.* The former are the things themſelves which are ſo in their *own nature.* the latter are ſo from the *manner* of their declaration.

1. There are in the Scripture, τινὰ δυσνόητα, Things *deep*, *wonderful*, *myſterious*, ſuch as in their own nature do abſolutely exceed the whole compaſs of our underſtanding or Reaſon, as unto a full and perfect comprehenſion of them. Nor ought it to be ſtrange unto any that ſundry *divine Revelations* ſhould be of things in their own nature incomprehenſible. For as unto us, many earthly and natural things are ſo, as *David* affirms concerning the forming of our natures in the Womb, *Pſal.* 139. 5, 6, 14, 15, 16. And our Saviour aſſures us that Heavenly things are much more above our comprehenſion then Earthly, *Joh.* 3. 12. Such as theſe are the *Trinity*, or the ſubſiſtence of one *ſingle divine nature in three Perſons*; The *Incarnation* of Chriſt, or the Aſſumption of our humane nature into perſonal Union and Subſiſtence with the Son of God; The *eternal Decrees* of God, their nature, order, cauſes and effects; the *Reſurrection* of the dead, the *Manner* of the operations of the Holy Spirit in forming the new creature in

us, and ſundry others. Our rational faculties in their utmoſt improvement in this World, and under the higheſt advantage they are capable of by Spiritual Light and Grace, are not able with all their *ſearchings* to find out the *Almighty* unto perfection in theſe things. And in all Diſputes about the Light of Glory: as whether we ſhall be able thereby to behold the Eſſence of God, to diſcern the depths of the Myſtery of the Incarnation, and the like; men do but darken *counſel by words without Knowledge*, and talk of what they neither do nor can underſtand. But yet the wiſdom of the Holy Spirit hath in theſe things two ways provided that we ſhall not ſuffer from our own weakneſs.

1. In that whatever is neceſſary for us to believe concerning theſe things is *plainly and clearly revealed* in the Scripture, and that Revelation declared in ſuch Propoſitions and Expreſſions as are obvious unto our underſtandings. And he who thinks we can believe nothing as *unto its Truth*, but what we can comprehend as unto its *Nature*, overthrows all Faith and Reaſon alſo. And propoſitions may be clear unto us in their ſenſe, when their Subject mat-

matter is incomprehenſible. For inſtance, conſider the *Incarnation of the Son of God*, and the *Hypoſtatical Union* therein of the divine and humane natures, it is a thing above our Reaſon and Comprehenſion. But in the Scripture it is plainly aſſerted and declared; that the *Word which is God, and was with God, was made fleſh; that God was manifeſt in the fleſh, that the Son of God was made of a woman, made under the Law, that he took on him the ſeed of* Abraham; *that he came of the Jews according to the fleſh, who is over all God bleſſed for ever; and that ſo God redeemed his Church with own blood.* Thus plainly and perſpicuouſly is this great matter, as it is the object of our Faith, as it is propoſed unto us to be believed, declared and expreſſed unto us. If any one ſhall now ſay, that he will *not believe that to be the ſenſe of theſe expreſſions*, which the words do plainly and undeniably manifeſt ſo to be, and are withall incapable of any other ſenſe or conſtruction; becauſe he cannot underſtand or comprehend the thing it ſelf which is ſignified thereby, it is plainly to ſay that he will believe nothing on the Authority and Veracity of God revealing it; but what he can comprehend by his own Reaſon

that he will believe; which is to overthrow all Faith divine. The reaſon of our believing if we believe at all, is Gods *Revelation of the Truth*, and not our underſtanding of the nature of the things revealed. Thereinto is our Faith reſolved, when our reaſon reacheth not unto the nature and exiſtence of the things themſelves. And the work of the Spirit it is, to *bring into captivity* unto the obedience of the Truth, every thought that might ariſe from our Ignorance, or the Impotency of our minds to comprehend the things to be believed. And that new Religion of *Socinianiſm* which pretends to reduce all to Reaſon, is wholly built upon the moſt irrational Principle that ever befell the minds of men. It is this alone: *What we cannot comprehend in things divine and infinite as unto their own nature, that we are not to believe in their Revelation.* On this ground alone do the men of that perſwaſion reject the Doctrine of the Trinity, of the Incarnation of the Son of God, of the Reſurrection of the dead, and the like myſteries of Faith. Whatever Teſtimony the Scripture gives unto them, becauſe their Reaſon cannot comprehend them, they profeſs they will not be-

believe them. A Principle wild and irrational, and which leads unto *Atheiſm*, ſeeing the being of God it ſelf is abſolutely incomprehenſible.

2. That Degree of Knowledge which we can attain in and about theſe things is *every way ſufficient with reſpect unto the end of the Revelation it ſelf.* If they were ſo propoſed unto us, as that if we could not fully comprehend them, we ſhould have no benefit or advantage by them; the Revelation it ſelf would be loſt, and the end of God fruſtrated therein. But this could not become divine wiſdom and Goodneſs to make ſuch propoſitions unto us. For this defect ariſeth not from any blamable *depravation of our nature* as corrupted, but from the very *Eſſence and Being* of it as created: For being finite and limited, it cannot perfectly comprehend things infinite. But whatever Believers are able to attain unto, in that variety of the degrees of Knowledge, which in their ſeveral circumſtances they do attain, is *ſufficient* unto the end whereunto it is deſigned; that is, ſufficient to ingenerate, cheriſh, encreaſe and preſerve Faith and Love, and Reverence with holy obedience in them, in ſuch a way and manner as will aſſuredly bring them unto

the end of all Supernatural Revelation in the *enjoyment* of God.

2. There are in the Scripture τινὰ δυσερμήνευτα: Some things that are *hard to be interpreted*; not from the *nature* of the things revealed, but from the *manner* of their Revelation. Such are many *Allegories*, *Parables*, *mystical Stories*, *Allusions*, *unfulfilled Prophesies* and *Predictions*, *References* unto the then *present customs*, *persons* and *places*, *computation of Times*, *Genealogies*, the *signification of some single words seldom or but once used* in the Scripture, the names of *divers Birds* and *Beasts*, unknown to us. Such things have a difficulty in them from the *manner* of their declaration. And it is hard to find out, and it may be in some instances impossible unto any determinate certainty, the proper genuine sense of them in the places where they occur. But herein also we have a *Relief* provided in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, in giving the whole Scripture for our Instruction, against any *disadvantage* unto our Faith or Obedience: For

(1.) Whatever is *so delivered* in any place, if it be of importance for us to know and believe as unto the ends of divine Revelation, it is in some other place or places

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unveiled and plainely declared, ſo that we may ſay of it as the Diſciples ſaid unto our Saviour; *Loe now he ſpeaketh plainely and not in Parables.* There can be no inſtance given of any obſcure place or paſſage in the Scripture, concerning which a man may rationally ſuppoſe or conjecture, that there is any *Doctrinal Truth* requiring our obedience contained in it, which is not elſewhere explained. And there may be ſeveral Reaſons why the Holy Spirit choſe to expreſs his mind at any time in ſuch waies as had ſo much *obſcurity* attending of them. (1.) As for *Types*, *Allegories*, *Myſtical Stories*, and *Obſcure Predictions*, he made uſe of them on purpoſe under the old Teſtament to draw a *Vail* over the things ſignified in them, or the Truths taught by them. For the Church was not yet to be acquainted with the clear Knowledg of the things concerning Jeſus Chriſt and his mediation; they had not ſo much as a *perfect Image* of the things themſelves, but only an *Obſcure ſhadow* or Repreſentation of Good things to come: *Heb.* 10. 1. To have given unto them *a full and clear Revelation* of all divine truths would have caſt the whole deſign of God for the various ſtates of the Church, and the accomplishment

pliſhment of the great work of his Grace and Love, into diſorder. It was not hard then for the Church to be taught of old in *Types and Allegorys*, but it was much Grace and mercy that through them the light of the *Sun of Righteouſneſs* ſo far beamed on them, as enabled them comfortably to wait untill the day did break and the ſhadows flee away; as *Cant.* 4. 6. The fulneſs and glory of the Revelation of *Grace and Truth* was reſerved for Jeſus Chriſt. God did them no wrong, but reſerved *better things for us*, *Heb.* 11. laſt

(2.) Whatever ſeems yet to be continued under any obſcurity of Revelation, it is ſo continued for the *exerciſe of our Faith*, *Diligence*, *Humility and Dependance on God*, in our enquirys into them. And ſuppoſe we do not alwaies attain preciſely unto the proper and peculiar intendment of the Holy Spirit in them, as we can never ſearch out his mind unto Perfection, yet are there ſo many and great advantages to be obtained by the due exerciſe of thoſe graces in the ſtudy of the word, that we can be no *loſers* by any difficulties we can meet withal. The rule in this caſe is, that we *affix no ſenſe unto any obſcure or difficult paſſage of Scripture*, *but what is materially true*, *and*

and conſonant unto other expreſs and plain Teſtimonies. For men to raiſe peculiar ſenſes from ſuch places, not confirmed elſewhere, is a dangerous curioſity.

(3.) As to ſundry *Prophecies of future Revolutions in the Church and the world*, like thoſe in the Revelation, there was an indiſpenſible neceſſity of giving them out in that obſcurity of *Allegorical expreſſions* and *Repreſentations* wherein we find them. For I could eaſily manifeſt, that as the clear and determinate declaration of *future events* in plain *Hiſtorical expreſſions* is contrary to the nature of *Prophecy*: ſo in this caſe it would have been a means of bringing confuſion on the works of God in the World, and of turning all men out of the way of their Obedience. Their preſent Revelation is ſufficient to guide the Faith, and regulate the Obedience of the Church ſo far as they are concerned in them.

4. Some things are in the Scripture diſpoſed on purpoſe that *evil*, *perverſe*, and *proud men* may *ſtumble and fall at them*, or be further hardened in their unbelief and obſtinacy. So our Lord Jeſus Chriſt affirms that he ſpake unto the *ſtubborn Jews in Parables that they might not underſtand.*

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And whereas there must be *Heresies*, that they which *are approved may be made manifest*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 19. and some *are of old ordained unto this condemnation*, *Jude* 4. Some things are so declared, that from them proud, perverse and wrangling Spirits may take occasion to wrest them unto their own destruction. The Truths of Christ as well as his Person, are appointed to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, yea a gin and a snare unto many. But this, humble teachable Believers are not concerned in.

2. The Holy Spirit hath given us a relief in this matter by supplying us with a *Rule of the Interpretation of Scripture, which whilst we sincerely attend unto, we are in no danger of sinful corrupting the word of God*, although we should not arrive unto its proper meaning in every particular place. And this Rule is the *Analogy* or Proportion of Faith. *Let him that propheseth, saith the Apostle*, that is, expoundeth the Scripture in the Church, *Do it according to the proportion of Faith*, *Rom.* 12. 6. And this *Analogy or Proportion of Faith*, is what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole Scripture, as the Rule of our Faith and Obedience. When men will engage their enquiries into parts of the Scripture, *Mystical*, *Alle-*

Allegorical, or *Prophetical*, aiming to find out, it may be, things new and curious, without a conſtant regard unto this *Analogy of Faith*, it is no wonder if they wander out of the way and err concerning the Truth, as many have done on that occaſion. And I cannot but declare my deteſtation of thoſe bold and curious conjectures which without any regard unto the *Rule of Propheſie* many have indulged themſelves in, on obſcure paſſages in the Scripture. But now ſuppoſe a man brings no preconceived ſenſe or opinion of his own unto ſuch places, ſeeking countenance thereunto from them, which is the bane of all Interpretation of the Scripture; ſuppoſe him to come in ſome meaſure prepared with the ſpiritual Qualifications before mentioned, and in all his enquiries have a conſtant due regard unto the *Analogy of Faith*, ſo as not to admit of any ſenſe which enterfereth with what is elſewhere plainely declared, ſuch a Perſon ſhall not miſs of the mind of the Holy Spirit; or if he do, ſhall be aſſuredly preſerved from any hurtful danger in his miſtakes. For there is that mutual Relation, one to another, yea that mutual inbeing of all divine truths, in their propoſal and Revelation in the Scripture,

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as that every one of them is after a ſort in every place, though not *properly* and *peculiarly*, yet by *conſequence* and *coherence*. Wherefore although a man ſhould miſs of the *firſt proper ſenſe* of any obſcure place of Scripture, which with all our diligence we ought to aime at. Yet whilſt he receiveth none but what containes a truth agreable unto what is revealed in other places, the error of his mind neither endangereth his own Faith or Obedience, nor thoſe of any others.

3. For thoſe things which are peculiarly difficult, as *Genealogys Chronological computations* of time, and the like, which are accidental unto the deſign of the Scripture, thoſe who are able ſo to do unto their own edification or others may exerciſe themſelves therein; and by all others, the conſideration of them in particular, may be ſafely omitted.

And theſe are the Heads of the *work of the Holy Spirit* on our minds, and on the Scriptures, conſidered diſtinctly and apart, with reference unto the right underſtanding of the *mind of God in them*. By the former ſort our *minds* are prepared to underſtand the Scripture; and by the the latter *Scripture* is prepared and ſuited unto

to our underſtandings. There yet remaines the conſideration of what he doth or what help he affords unto us in the *actual application of our minds unto the underſtanding and Interpretation of the word.* And this reſpecteth the means which we are to make uſe of unto that end and purpoſe, and theſe alſo ſhall be briefly declared.

CHAP. VII.

Means to be uſed for the right underſtanding of the mind of God in the Scripture. Thoſe which are preſcribed in a way of Duty.

THE means to be uſed for the right underſtanding and Interpretation of the Scripture are of two ſorts. (1.) That which is general and abſolutely neceſſary; (2.) Such as conſiſt in the due improvement thereof. The firſt is *diligent reading of the Scripture with a ſedate, rational conſideration of what we read.* Nothing is more frequently recommended unto us; and, not to inſiſt on particular teſtimonies, the whole 119. *Pſalm.*

Pſal. is ſpent in the Declaration of this duty, and the benefits which are attained thereby. Herein conſiſts the firſt natural exerciſe of our minds in order unto the underſtanding of it. So the *Eunuch* read and pondered on the Prophecy of *Iſaiah*, though of himſelf he could not attain the underſtanding of what he read, *Act.* 8. 30, 31. Either *Reading*, or that which is equivalent thereunto, is that whereby we do, and without which it is impoſſible we ſhould apply our minds to know what is contained in the Scriptures. And this is that which all other means are deſigned to render uſeful. Now by this *Reading* I underſtand that which is *ſtayed*, *ſedate*, *conſiderative*, with reſpect unto the end, aimed at; *Reading* attended with a due conſideration of the things *Read*, enquiry into them, Meditation on them, with a regard unto the deſigne and ſcope of the place, with all other advantages for the due Inveſtigation of the truth.

Frequent Reading of the Word more generally and curſorily, whereunto all Chriſtians ought to be trained from their youth, (2 *Tim.* 3. 15.) and which all Coſſets and families ſhould be acquainted withal, (*Deut.* 6. 6, 7, 8, 9.) Is of great uſe and advantage; and I ſhall therefore name ſome particular

ticular benefits which may be received thereby.

1. Hereby the minds of men are brought into a *general acquaintance* with the nature and design of the *Book of God*, which some to their present shame, and future ruine, are prodigiously ignorant of.

2. They who are exercised herein, come to know *distinctly* what things are treated of in the *particular Books* and passages of it; whilst others who live in a *neglect of this Duty*, scarce know what Books are *Historical*, what *Prophetical*, or what *Doctrinal* in the whole Bible.

3. Hereby they exercise themselves unto *thoughts of Heavenly things*, and an holy converse with God; if they bring along with them as they ought, Hearts *humble* and sensible of his Authority in the word.

4. Their minds are insensibly furnished with *due conceptions about God*, *spiritual things*, *themselves*, and *their conditions*; and their memories with expressions proper and meet to be used about them in Prayer or other ways.

5. God oftentimes takes occasion herein, to *influence their souls* with the efficacy of divine truth in particular, in the way of

Exhortation, *Reproof*, *Inſtruction* or *Conſolation*, whereof all who attend diligently unto this Duty, have experience.

6. They come by *reaſon of uſe* to have their *ſenſes exerciſed* to diſcern good and evil, ſo that if any noxious or corrupt ſenſe of any place of the Scripture be ſuggeſted unto them, they have in readineſs wherewith to oppoſe it, from other places from whence they are inſtructed in the truth.

And many other Advantages there are which men may reap from the *conſtant Reading* of the Scripture, which I therefore reckon as a *general means* of coming to the knowledg of the mind of God therein. But this is not that which at preſent I eſpecially intend. Wherefore

By this *Reading* of the Scripture, I mean the ſtudying of it in the uſe of means to come to a due underſtanding of it in particular places. For it is about the means of the *Solemn Interpretation* of the Scripture that we now enquire. Hereunto I ſay the general ſtudy of the whole, and in particular the places to be interpreted is required. It may ſeem altogether needleſs and impertinent to give this direction, for the underſtanding of the mind of God in the Scripture, namely, that we ſhould read and

ſtudy

ſtudy it to that end. For who can imagine how it ſhould be done otherwiſe. But I wiſh the practice of many, it may be of the moſt, did not render this Direction, neceſſary. For in their deſign to come to the knowledg of Spiritual things, the direct immediate ſtudy of the Scripture, is that which they leaſt of all apply themſelves unto. Other *Writings* they will read and ſtudy with diligence. But their Reading of the Scripture is for the moſt part ſuperficial, without that intenſion of mind and Spirit, that uſe and application of means which are neceſſary unto the underſtanding of it, as the event doth manifeſt. It is the immeditate ſtudy of the Scripture that I intend. And hereunto I do refer, (1) A due conſideration of the *Analogy of Faith* alwaies to be retained. (2.) A due *examination* of the deſign and *Scope of the place* (3.) A diligent obſervation of *Antecedents* and *Conſequents*, with all thoſe general rules which are uſually given as directions in the Interpretation of the Scripture. This therefore in the diligent exerciſe of our minds and reaſons is the firſt general outward means of knowing the mind of God in the Scripture, and the Interpretation thereof.

2. The means deſigned for the improve-

ment hereof, or our profitable use of it are of three sorts. 1. *Spiritual.* 2. *Disciplinary.* 3. *Ecclesiastical.* Some instances on each Head will further clear what I intend.

(1.) The first thing required as a *Spiritual means* is *Prayer.* I intend *fervent and earnest Prayer* for the assistance of the Spirit of God, revealing the mind of God as in the whole Scripture, so in particular Books and passages of it. I have proved before that this is both enjoyned and commanded unto us by the Practice of the *Prophets* and *Apostles.* And this also by the way invincibly proves, that the due Investigation of the mind of God in the Scripture, is a work above the utmost improvement of natural reason, with all outward Advantages whatsoever. For were we sufficient of our selves without immediate divine Aid and assistance for this work, why do we pray for them? with which Argument the antient Church perpetually urged the *Pelagians*, as to the necessity of saving Grace. And it may be justly supposed that no man who professeth himself a Christian, can be so forsaken of all sobriety, as once to question whether this be the *Duty of every one* who hath either desire or design to attain any real knowledg of the Will of God

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in the Scripture. But the practical neglect of this Duty is the true reaſon why ſo many that are skilful enough in the *diſciplinary means of knowledg* are yet ſuch ſtrangers to the true Knowledg of the Mind of God. And this Prayer is of two ſorts.

1. That which reſpects the *Teaching of the Spirit* in general, whereby we labour in our Prayers, *that he would enlighten our minds, and lead us into the knowledg of the Truth*, according to the work before deſcribed. The *importance of this grace* unto our Faith and Obedience, the *multiplied Promiſes* of God concerning it, our neceſſity of it from our natural weakneſs, ignorance and darkneſs, ſhould render it a principal part of our daily ſupplications. Eſpecially is this incumbent on them who are called in an eſpecial manner, to *ſearch the Scriptures*, and to declare the Mind of God in them unto others. And great are the advantages which a conſcientious diſcharge of this Duty with a due reverence of God brings along with it. Prejudices, preconceived opinions, engagements by ſecular advantages, falſe confidences, Authority of men, Influences from Parties and Societies, will be all laid level before it, at leaſt be gradually exterminated out of the

minds of men thereby. And how much the casting out of all this *Old Leven* tends to prepare the mind for, and to give it a due understanding of divine Revelations, hath been proved before. I no way doubt but that the rise and continuance of all those *enormous errours* which so infest Christian Religion, and which many seek so sedulously to confirm from the Scripture it self, are in a great measure to be ascribed unto the corrupt affections with the power of Tradition, and influences of secular advantages, which cannot firm their station in the minds of them who are constant sincere suppliants at the throne of grace to be taught of God what is his mind and will in his word. For it includes a *prevailing resolution* sincerely to receive what we are so instructed in, whatever effects it may have upon the inward or outward man. And this is the only way to preserve our souls under the influences of divine teachings, and the Irradiation of the Holy Spirit, without which we can neither learn, nor know any thing as we ought. I suppose therefore this may be fixed on as a *Common principle of Christianity*; namely, that constant and fervent Prayer for the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, is such an indispensible

penſible means for the attaining the Knowledg of the mind of God in the Scripture, as that without it all others will not be available.

Nor do I believe that any one who doth, and can thus pray as he ought in a conſcientious ſtudy of the word, ſhall ever be left unto the *final Prevalency* of any pernitious error; or the Ignorance of any fundamental truth. None utterly miſcarry in the ſeeking after the mind of God, but thoſe who are perverted by their own corrupt minds. Whatever appearance there be of ſincerity and diligence in ſeeking after truth, if men miſcarry therein, it is far more ſafe to judg, that they do ſo, either through the neglect of this Duty, or indulgence unto ſome corruption of their hearts and minds, then that God is wanting to reveal himſelf unto thoſe that diligently ſeek him. And there are unfailing grounds of this aſſurance. For (1.) Faith exerciſed in this Duty will work out all that *filthineſs and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs*, which would hinder us ſo to receive the ingrafted word with meekeneſs, as that it ſhould ſave our ſouls. (2.) It will work in the mind thoſe gracious qualifications of *Humilty and meekneſs*, whereunto the Teachings of God are promiſed

miſed in an eſpecial manner, as we have ſhewed. And (3.) Our Saviour hath aſſured us, that his *Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him. Luk.* 11. 13. Neither is any ſupplication for the Holy Spirit more acceptable unto God, then that which deſigns the Knowledg of his mind and will that we may do them. (4) All thoſe *Graces* which render the mind *teachable, and meet unto the reception of Heavenly Truths*, are kept up unto a due exerciſe therein. If we deceive not our ſelves in theſe things, we cannot be deceived. For in the diſcharge of this Duty thoſe things are learned in their *Power*, whereof we have the *notion* only in other means of Inſtruction. And hereby whatever we learn, is ſo fixed upon our minds, poſſeſſeth them with ſuch power, transforming them into the likeneſs of it, as that they are prepared for the communication of farther Light, and encreaſes in the degrees of Knowledg.

Nor can it be granted on the other hand, that any ſacred Truth is learned in a *due manner*, whatever diligence be uſed in its acquiſition; or that we can know the mind of God in the Scripture in any thing as we ought, when the mannagement of all other

other means which we make uſe of unto that end, is not committed unto the hand of this Duty. The *Apoſtle* deſiring earneſtly that thoſe unto whom he wrote, and whom he inſtructed in the myſteries of the Goſpel, might have a due *Spiritual underſtanding* of the mind of God, as revealed and taught in them, prays with all fervency of mind, that they might have a *communication of the Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation from above* to enable them thereunto, *Eph.* 1. 17,18,19. *ch.* 3. 14,15,16,17. For without this he knew it could not be attained. That which he did for them, we are obliged to do for *our ſelves*. And where this is neglected, eſpecially conſidering that the *ſupplies of the Spirit* unto this purpoſe are confined unto them that *ask* him, there is no Ground of expectation, that any one ſhould ever learn the ſaving Knowledg of the mind of God in a due manner.

I ſhall therefore fix this aſſertion as a ſacred truth. *Whoever in the diligent and immediate ſtudy of the Scripture to know the mind of God therein ſo as to do it, doth abide in fervent ſupplications in and by Jeſus Chriſt for ſupplies of the Spirit of Grace, to lead him into all truth, to reveal and make known unto him the truth as it is in Jeſus, to*

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give him an understanding of the Scriptures, and the will of God therein, he shall be preserved from pernitious errors, and attain that degree in Knowledg, as shall be sufficient unto the guidance and preservation of the life of God, in the whole of his Faith and obedience. And more security of truth there is herein, then in mens giving themselves up unto any other conduct in this world whatever. The goodness of God, his Faithfulness in being the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, the command of this Duty unto this end, the promises annexed unto it, with the whole nature of Religion, do give us the highest security herein. And although these *Duties* cannot but be accompanied with a conscientious care and fear of errors and mistakes, yet the *Persons* that are found in them, have no Ground of troublesome thoughts or fearful suspicions, that they shall be deceived or fail in the end they aim at.

(2.) Prayer respects *particular occasions*, or especial places of Scripture, whose exposition or interpretation we enquire after. This is the great Duty of a *Faithful Interpreter*, that which in, with, and after the use of all means, he betakes himself unto. An experience of divine guidance and assistance herein

herein, is that which unto ſome is unvaluable; however by others it be deſpiſed. But ſhall we think it ſtrange for a Chriſtian, when it may be after the uſe of all other means, he finds himſelf at a loſs about the true meaning and intention of the Holy Spirit in any place or Text of Scripture, to betake himſelf in a more then ordinary manner unto God by *Prayer*, that he would by his Spirit enlighten, guide, teach, and ſo reveal the truth unto him: or ſhould we think it ſtrange that God ſhould hear ſuch Prayers, and inſtruct ſuch perſons in the *ſecrets of his Covenant*? God forbid there ſhould be ſuch *Atheiſtical* thoughts in the minds of any, who would be eſteemed Chriſtians. Yea I muſt ſay, that for a man to undertake the interpretation of any part or portion of Scripture in a ſolemn manner without *invocation of God* to be taught and inſtructed by his Spirit, is an high Provocation of him. Nor ſhall I expect the diſcovery of truth from any one who ſo proudly and ignorantly ingageth in a work ſo much above his ability to manage. I ſpeak this of ſolemn and ſtated Interpretations; for otherwiſe a *Scribe ready furniſhed for the Kingdom of God*, may as he hath occaſion, from the Spiritual Light and

and understanding wherewith he is endued, and the stores he hath already received, declare the mind of God unto the edification of others. But this is the first means to render our *studying of the Scripture* useful and effectual unto the end aimed at.

This (as was said) is the *sheat Anchor* of a Faithful expositor of the Scripture which he betakes himself unto in all Difficulties. Nor can he without it be lead into a comfortable satisfaction, that he hath attained the mind of the Holy Ghost in any divine Revelation. When all other helps fail, as he shall in most places find them to do, if he be really intent on the disquisition of truth, this will yield him his best relief. And so long as this is attended unto, we need not fear farther useful interpretations of the Scripture, or the several parts of it, then as yet have been attained unto by the endeavours of others. For the stores of Truth laid up in it, are inexhaustible. And hereby will they be opened unto those that enquire into them with Humility and Diligence. The Labours of those who have gone before us, are of excellent use herein. But they are yet very far from having discovered the *Depths* of this vein of Wisdom. Nor will the best of our endeavours

prescribe

preſcribe limits and bounds to them that ſhall come after us. And the reaſon why the *Generality of Expoſitors* go in the ſame track one after another, ſeldom paſſing beyond the beaten path of former endeavours, unleſs it be in ſome excurſions of curioſity, is the want of giving up themſelves unto the conduct of the Holy Spirit in the diligent performance of this Duty.

Secondly; *Readineſs to receive impreſſions from divine Truths as revealed unto us*, conforming our minds and Hearts unto the Doctrine made known, is another means unto the ſame end. This is the firſt end of all divine Revelations of all Heavenly Truths, namely, to beget the Image and likeneſs of themelves in the minds of men, *Rom.* 6. 17. 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. And we miſs our aim if this be not the firſt thing we intend in the ſtudy of the Scripture. It is not to learn *the form of the Doctrine of Godlineſs*, but to get the *Power* of it implanted in our ſouls. And this is an eminent means of our making a progreſs in the knowledg of the truth. To ſeek after meer *notions of Truth*, without an endeavour after an *experience of its Power* in our hearts, is not the way to encreaſe our

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underſtanding in Spiritual things. He alone is in a poſture to learn from God, who ſincerely gives up his mind, conſcience and Affections to the power and rule of what is revealed unto him. Men may have in their ſtudy of the Scripture other ends alſo, as the profit and edification of others. *But if this conforming of their own ſouls unto the Power of the Word*, be not fixed in the firſt place in their minds, they do not *ſtrive lawfully, nor will be crowned.* And if at any time when we ſtudy the word, we have not this deſign expreſly in our minds, yet if upon the diſcovery of any Truth, we endeavour not to have the *likeneſs of it* in our own Hearts, we loſe our principal advantage by it.

Thirdly; *Practical obedience in the courſe of our walking before God*, is another means unto the ſame end. The Goſpel is the *Truth which is according unto Godlineſs, Tit.* 1. 1. And it will not long abide with any who follow not after godlineſs according unto its guidance and direction. Hence we ſee ſo many to loſe that very underſtanding which they had of the Doctrines of it, when once they being to give up themſelves to ungodly lives. The true notion of *holy Evangelical Truths* will not *live*, at leaſt

leaſt not *flouriſh*, where they are divided from an holy converſation. As we learn all to practice, ſo we learn much by practice. There is no *Practical Science* which we can make any great improvements of, without an aſſiduous practice of its *Theorems*. Much leſs is *Wiſdom*, ſuch as is the underſtanding of the myſteries of the Scripture to be encreaſed, unleſs a man be *practically converſant* about the things which it directs unto.

And herein alone we can come unto the *aſſurance*, that what we know and learn is indeed the Truth. So our Saviour tells us, *That if any man do the will of God, he ſhall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God*, Joh. 7. 17. Whilſt men learn the Truth only in the notion of it, whatever conviction of its being ſo it is accompanied withal, they will never attain *ſtability* in their minds concerning it, nor come to the *full aſſurance of underſtanding*, unleſs they continually exemplify it in their own Obedience, doing the will of God. This is that which will give them a ſatisfactory perſwaſion of it. And hereby will they be lead continually into farther degrees of knowledg. For the mind of man is capable of receiving *continual ſupplies* in the encreaſe of

of Light and Knowledg whilſt it is in this world, if ſo be they are improved unto their proper end in obedience unto God. But without this the mind will be quickly ſtuffed with notions, ſo that no ſtreams can deſcend into it from the Fountain of Truth.

Fourthly; A *conſtant deſign for growth, and a Progreſs in Knowledg, out of Love to the Truth, and experience of its excellency*, is uſefull, yea needfull unto the right underſtanding of the mind of God in the Scriptures. Some are quickly apt to think, that they know *enough*, as much as is needfull for them; ſome that they know *all* that is to be known, or have a ſufficient comprehenſion of all the counſels of God as revealed in the Scripture, or as they rather judge of the whole *Body of Divinity* in all the parts of it, which they may have diſpoſed into an exact method with great accuracy and skill. No great or uſefull diſcoveries of the mind of God, ſhall I expect from ſuch Perſons. Another frame of heart and Spirit is required in them who deſign to be inſtructed in the mind of God, or to learn it in the ſtudy of the Scripture. Such Perſons look upon it as a Treaſury of Divine Truths abſolutely unfathomable by

any created understandings. The truths which they do receive from thence, and comprehend according to their measure, therein, they judge *amiable, excellent and desirable* above all earthly things. For they find the fruit, benefit and advantage of them, in strengthening the Life of God in them, conforming their souls unto him, communicating of his Light, Love, Grace and Power unto them.

This makes them with purpose of heart continually to press in the use of all means to *increase in this wisdom, to grow in the Knowledg of God & our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* They are pressing on continually unto that measure of perfection which in this life is attainable. And every new beam of Truth whereby their minds are enlightened, guides them into fresh discoveries of it. This frame of mind is under a promise of divine Teachings, *Hos.6. 3. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.* If *thou criest after knowledg, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledg of God. Pro. 2. 3, 4, 5, 6.* When men live in an holy Admiration of, and complacency in God,

as the God of Truth, as the first infinite essential Truth, in whose enjoyment alone there is fulness of all satisfactory Light and Knowledg; when they adore the fulness of those Revelations of himself which with infinite Wisdom he hath treasured up in the Scriptures; when they find by experience an excellency, power, and efficacy in what they have attained unto, and out of a deep sense of the smalness of their measures, of the meanness of their Attainments, and how little a Portion it is they know of God, do live in a constant design to abide with Faith and patience in continual study of the word, and enquiries into the Mind of God therein, *they are in the way of* being taught by him, and learning of his Mind, unto all the proper ends of its Revelation.

Fifthly; There are sundry *Ordinances of Spiritual worship* which God hath ordained as a means of our Illumination: A religious Attendance whereunto is required of them who intend to grow in Grace and in the Knowledg of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And this is *the first Head of means* for the due improvement of our endeavours, in reading and studying of the Scriptures, that we

we may come thereby unto a right understanding of the Mind of God in them, and be able to interpret them unto the use and benefit of others. What is the work of the *Holy Spirit* herein, what is the Aid and Assistance which he contributes hereunto, is so manifest from what we have discoursed, especially concerning his Operations in us as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, (not yet made publick) that it must not be here insisted on.

It may be these means will be despised by some, and the proposal of them to this end looked on as weak and ridiculous, if not extreamly *fanciful*. For it is supposed that these things are pressed to no other end but to decry *Learning*, *Study*, and the use of reason in the Interpretation of the Scriptures, which will quickly reduce all Religion into *Enthusiasm*. Whether there be any thing of Truth in this suggestion shall be immediately discovered. Nor have those by whom these things are pressed the least reason to decline the use of *Learning* or any rational means in their proper place, as though they were conscious to themselves of a deficiency in them with respect unto those by whom they are so highly, and indeed for the most part *vainly* pretended unto.

But in the matter in hand, we muſt deal with ſome confidence. They by whom theſe things are *decryed*, by whom they are *denyed* to be neceſſary means for the right underſtanding of the Mind of God in the Scriptures, do plainly renounce the cheif principles of Chriſtian Religion. For although the Scripture hath many things *in common* with other writings wherein *ſecular Arts and Sciences* are declared; yet to ſuppoſe that we may attain the ſenſe and Mind of God in them, by the meer uſe of ſuch *waies and means* as we apply in the inveſtigation of Truths of other natures, is to exclude all conſideration of God, of Jeſus Chriſt, of the Holy Spirit, of the end of the Scriptures themſelves, of the nature and uſe of the things delivered in them, and by conſequent to overthrow all Religion; ſee *Pro* 28.5.

And this firſt ſort of *means* which we have hitherto inſiſted on, are *Duties* in themſelves as well as means unto farther ends. And *all Duties* under the Goſpel are the waies and means wherein, and whereby the Graces of God are exerciſed For as no *Grace* can be exerted or exerciſed, but in a way of duty, ſo no duty is *Evangelical* or accepted with God, but what eſpecial Grace is exerciſed

exerciſed in. As the word is the Rule whereby they are guided, directed and meaſured; ſo the *acting of Grace in them*, is that whereby they are quickned, without which the beſt Duties are but dead works. *Materially* they are Duties, but *formally* they are ſins. In their performance therefore as Goſpel Duties, and as they are accepted with God, there is an eſpecial Aid and Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit. And on that account there is ſo in the *Interpretation* of the Scriptures. For if without his aſſiſtance we cannot make uſe aright of the means of interpreting of the Scripture, we cannot interpret the Scripture without it. The Truth is, they who ſhall either ſay, that theſe Duties are not neceſſarily required unto them who would *ſearch the Scripture*, and find out the Mind of God for their own edification, or ſo as to expound thoſe Oracles of God unto others; or that they may be performed in a manner acceptable unto God, and uſefully unto this end without the eſpecial Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, do *impiouſly* what lies in them evert the whole Doctrine of the Goſpel, and the Grace thereof.

That which in the next place might be inſiſted on, is the conſideration of the *eſpe-*

cial Rules which have been or may yet be given for the right Interpretation of the Scriptures. Such are they which concern *the ſtile* of the Scripture, its eſpecial *Phraſeology*, the *Tropes* and *Figures* it makes uſe of, the *Way* of its arguing, the *Times* and ſeaſons wherein it was written, or the ſeveral Parts of it; the *occaſions* under the Guidance of the Spirit of God given thereunto, the *deſign* and ſcope of *particular Writers*, with what is peculiar unto them in their manner of Writing, the *comparing of ſeveral places*, as to their difference in things and expreſſions, the Reconciliation of ſeeming contradictions, with other things of an alike nature. But as the moſt of theſe may be reduced unto what hath been ſpoken before, about the *Diſpoſal and Perſpicuity* of the Scripture, ſo they have been already handled by many others at large, and therefore I ſhall not here inſiſt upon them, but ſpeak only unto the general means that are to be applied unto the ſame end.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The Second ſort of means for the Interpretation of the Scriptnre, which are Diſciplinarian.

THE *Second ſort* of means I call *Diſciplinarian*, as conſiſting in the due uſe and improvement of *common Arts and Sciences*, applied unto, and made uſe of in the ſtudy of the Scriptures. And theſe are things which have no *Moral good* in themſelves, but being indifferent in their own nature, their end, with the manner of their mannagement there unto, is the only meaſure and ſtandard of their worth and value. Hence it is that in the Application of them unto the *Interpretation of the Scripture*, they may be *uſed aright*, and in a due manner, and they may be *abuſed* to the great diſadvantage of them who uſe them; and accordingly it hath fallen out. In the firſt way they receive a *Bleſſing* from the Spirit of God, who alone proſpereth every good and honeſt indeavour in any kind; & in the latter they are efficacious to

ſeduce men unto a Truſt in their own underſtandings, which in other things is fooliſh, and in theſe things pernitious.

That which of this ſort I prefer in the firſt place, is the *Knowledg of, and skill in the languages wherein the Scripture was originally written.* For the very words of them therein, were peculiarly from the Holy Ghoſt, which gives them to be דברי אמת *Words of Truth*, and the Scripture it ſelf to be בתובה ישר, A right, or upright, or perfect writing, *Eccleſ.* 12. 10. The Scriptures of the Old Teſtament were given unto the Church whilſt it was entirely confined unto one Nation, *Pſal.* 147. 19, 20. Thence they were all written in that Language which was common among, and peculiar unto that Nation. And this Language, as the People it ſelf, was called *Hebrew* from *Heber* the Son of *Salah*, the Son of *Arphaxad*, the Son of *Shem*, their moſt eminent progenitor, *Gen.* 10. 23, 24. For being the one Original Tongue of mankind, it remained in ſome part of his family, who probably joyned not in the *great Apoſtaſy* of the world from God, nor was concerned in their diſperſion at the building of *Babel*, which enſued thereon. The Derivation of that name from another

Original

Original, is a fruit of curioſity and vain conjecture, as I have elſewhere demonſtrated.

In proceſs of time that People were carried into *Captivity* out of their own Land, and were thereby forced to learn, and uſe a Language ſomewhat different from their own; *Another* abſolutely it was not, yet ſo far did it differ from it, that thoſe who knew and ſpoke the one commonly could not underſtand the other, 2 *Kings* 18. 26. This was לשון כסרים, *Dan.* 1. 4. *The Language of the Caldeans*, which *Daniel* and others learned. But by the Peoples long continuance in that country it became common to them all. After this ſome parts of the Books of the Scripture, as of *Daniel* and Ezra, were written in that Language, as alſo *one* verſe in the Prophecy of *Jeremiah*, when they were ready to be carried thither, in which he inſtructs the people how to reproach the Idols of the Nations in their own Language, *Jer.* 10. 11. The Deſign of God was that his word ſhould be alwaies read and uſed in that Language, which was commonly underſtood by them unto whom he granted the Priviledg thereof, nor could any of the ends of his wiſdom and goodneſs in that merciful Grant, be otherwiſe attained. The

The Prodigious conceit of *Keeping the Scripture* which is the Foundation, Rule and Guide of the whole Church, the Spiritual food and means of life unto all the members of it, by the *Church*, or thoſe who pretend themſelves intruſted with the Power and Rights of it, in a *Language unknown* unto the community of the people, had not then befallen the Minds of men, no more then it hath yet any countenance given unto it, by the Authority of God, or Reaſon of mankind. And indeed the Advancement and Defence of this Imagination, is one of thoſe things which ſets me at liberty from being influenced by the *Authority* of any ſort of men in matters of Religion. For what will not their confidence undertake to vent, and their *Sophiſtical* Ability give countenance unto, or wrangle about, which their intereſt requires and calls for at their hands; who can openly plead and contend for the truth of ſuch an abſurd and irrational Aſſertion, as is contrary to all that we know of God and his Will, to all that we underſtand of our ſelves or our Duty, with reſpect thereunto.

When the *New Teſtament* was to be written, the Church was to be diffuſed through-

throughout the world, amongſt People of all Tongues and Languages under Heaven: Yet there was a neceſſity that it ſhould be written in *ſome one certain Language*, wherein the ſacred Truth of it might, as in Original Records, be ſafely laid up and depoſited. It was left, as παραθηκην, ἱερὸν παρακαταθηκην, a good and ſacred *depoſitum* unto the Miniſtry of the Church to be kept inviolate, by the Holy Ghoſt, 1 *Tim.* 6. 20. 2 *Tim.* 1. 14. And it was diſpoſed into Writing in *one certain Language*, wherein the preſervation of it in purity, was committed to the Miniſtry of all Ages; not abſolutely, but under his care and inſpection. From this *one Language* God had ordained, that it ſhould be derived by the care of the Miniſtry unto the knowledg and uſe of all Nations and People. And this was repreſented by the *Miraculous Gift of Tongues* communicated by the Holy Ghoſt unto the firſt deſigned Publiſhers of the Goſpel. In this caſe it pleaſed the Wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt to make uſe of the *Greek Language*, wherein he writ the whole New Teſtament Originally. For the report that the Goſpel of *Matthew* and the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* were firſt written in *Hebrew*, is altogether groundleſs, and I have elſewhere diſproved it. Now

Now this Language at that ſeaſon through all ſorts of Advantages was diffuſed throughout the world, eſpecially in thoſe parts of it where God had deſigned to fix the firſt and principal ſtation of the Church. For the *Eaſtern parts* of the world, it was long before carried into them, and its uſe impoſed on them by the *Mecedonian Armes* and *Laws*, with the eſtabliſhment of the *Grecian Empire* for ſundry Ages among them. And ſome while before in the *Weſtern parts* of the world, the ſame Language was greatly enquired into, and generally received, on the account of the *Wiſdom* and *Learning* which was treaſured up therein, in the writings of *Poets*, *Philoſophers*, and *Hiſtorians*, which had newly received a peculiar advancement.

For two things fell out in the Providence of God about that ſeaſon, which greatly conduced unto the furtherance of the Goſple. The *Jews* were wholly poſſeſſed of whatever was *true* in Religion, and which lay in a direct ſubſerviency unto the Goſpel it ſelf. This they gloried in, and boaſted of, as a Privilege which they enjoyed above all the world. The *Grecians* on the other hand, were poſſeſſed of skill and Wiſdom in all Arts and Sciences, with the

the products of *Philosophical enquiries*, and elegancy of speech in expressing the conceptions of their minds. And this they gloried in and boasted of above all other People in the world. Now both these Nations being dispossessed of their *Empire*, *Soveraignity*, and *Liberty at home* by the *Romans*, multitudes of them made it their business to disperse themselves in the world, and to seek as it were a *new Empire*, the one to its *Religion*, and the other to its *Language*, Arts and Sciences. Of both sorts with their design, the *Roman* Writers in those days do take notice, and greatly complain. And these Privileges being boasted of, and rested in, proved equally prejudicial to both Nations, as to the *Reception of the Gospel*, as our Apostle disputes at large, 1 *Cor.* 1, 2. But through the wisedom of God disposing and ordering all things unto his own Glory, the design and actings of them both became an effectual means to *facilitate* the Propagation of the Gospel. For the *Jews* having planted *Synagogues* in most Nations and principal Citys of the *Roman Empire*, they had both leavened Multitudes of people with some knowledg of the true God, which prepared the way of the Gospel; as also they had gathered *fixed Assemblies*,

Aſſemblies, which the Preachers of the Goſpel conſtantly took the Advantage of, to enter upon their work, and to begin the declaration of their meſſage. The *Grecians* on the other hand, had ſo univerſally diffuſed the Knowledg of their *Language*, as the uſe of that one Tongue alone was ſufficient to inſtruct all ſorts of people throughout the world in the Knowledg of the Truth. For the *Gift of Tongues* was only to be a *ſign unto unbeleivers*, 1 *Cor.* 14. And not a means of Preaching the Goſpel conſtantly in a Language which he underſtood not who ſpake.

In this Language therefore as the moſt common, diffuſive, and generally underſtood in the world, did God order that the Books of the *New Teſtament* ſhould be written. From thence by Tranſlations and expoſitions, was it to be derived into other Tongues and Languages. For the deſign of God was ſtill the ſame, that his Word ſhould be declared unto the Church, in a Language *which* it underſtood. Hence is that peculiar Diſtribution of the Nations of the world, into *Jews*, *Greeks*, *Barbarians and Scythians*; not accommodated unto the uſe of thoſe times in *Grecian Writers*, unto whom the *Jews* were no leſs *Barbarians*

rians then the *Scythians* themſelves, *Col.* 3. 11. But as the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament were peculiarly given unto the *Jews*, ſo were thoſe of the New unto the *Greeks*, that is, thoſe who made uſe of their Language, from whence it was deduced unto all other Nations, called *Barbarians* and *Scythians*.

It muſt be acknowledged that the Scripture as written in theſe Languages, is accompanied with many and great advantages. (1.) In them peculiarly is it γραφὴ θεόπνευς, a *Writing by divine Inſpiration*, 2 *Tim.* 3.16. And ספר יהוה the *Book of Writing of the Lord*, *Iſa.* 34. 16. With a ſingular Priviledg above all Tranſlations. Hence the very words themſelves as therein uſed and placed are *ſacred*, *conſecrated by God* unto that holy uſe. The *ſacred ſenſe* indeed of the words and expreſſion is the *Internum formale ſacrum*, or that wherein the Holineſs of the Scripture doth conſiſt. But the *Writing it ſelf* in the Original Languages, in the words choſen and uſed by the Holy Ghoſt, is the *externum formale*, of the Holy Scripture, and is *materially ſacred*.

It is the ſenſe therefore of the Scripture which principally, and for its own ſake we enquire

enquire after and into; that divine ſenſe which as *Juſtin Martyr* ſpeaks, is ὑπερ λόγον, ὑπερ νοῦν, καὶ ὑπερ πᾶσαν καταλήψιν; abſolutely above our natural reaſon, underſtanding and comprehenſion. In the *words* we are concerned with reſpect thereunto, as by the Wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt they are deſigned as the written ſigns thereof.

(2.) The *words of the Scripture* being given thus immediately from God, every *Apex*, *Tittle*, or *Iota* in the whole, is conſiderable, as that which is an effect of divine Wiſdom, and therefore filled with ſacred Truth according to their place and meaſure. Hence they are all under the eſpecial care of God, according to that Promiſe of our Saviour, *Matth.* 5. 18. Verily I ſay unto you, ἕως ἂν παρέλθη ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθη ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου *Till Heaven and* Earth *paſs away, one jot or one tittle ſhall not paſs from the Law.* That our Saviour doth here intend the *writing of the Scriptures* then in uſe in the Church, and aſſure the protection of God unto the leaſt *letter*, *vowel* or *point* of it, I have proved elſewhere. And himſelf in due time will reprove the profane boldneſs of them, who without evidence or ſufficient proof, without that reſpect and reverence which is due

due unto the Intereſt, Care, Providence and Faithfulneſs of God in this matter, do aſſert *manifold changes* to have been made in the original writings of the Scripture.

But as I ſaid, divine ſenſes, and ſingular myſteries may be couched in the uſe and diſpoſal of a *letter*. And this God himſelf hath manifeſted, as in ſundry other inſtances, ſo in the change of the names of *Abram* and *Sarai*, wherein the addition or alteration of one letter carried along with it a myſterious ſignification for the uſe of the Church in all Ages. In Tranſlations nothing of that nature can be obſerved. And hence a due conſideration of the very *accents* in the Original of the Old Teſtament as *diſtinctive* or *conjunctive* is a ſingular advantage in the Inveſtigation of the ſenſe of particular places and ſentences.

(*3dly*) There is in the Originals of the Scripture a peculiar *Emphaſis* of words and expreſſions, and in them an eſpecial *energy* to intimate and inſinuate the ſenſe of the Holy Ghoſt unto the minds of men, which cannot be traduced into other Languages by Tranſlations, ſo as to obtain the ſame Power and efficacy. Now this is not abſolutely from the nature of the *Original Languages* themſelves, eſpecially not of the

Greek whoſe Principal advantages and excellencies, in *copiouſneſs*, and *elegancy* are little uſed in the new Teſtament; but from a ſecret impreſſion of *divine Wiſdom*, and efficacy accompanying the immediate delivery of the mind of God in them. There is therefore no ſmall advantage hence to be obtained in the Interpretation of the Scripture. For when we have received an impreſſion on our minds of the ſenſe and intention of the Holy Ghoſt in any particular place, we ſhall ſeek for meet words to expreſs it by, wherein conſiſts the whole work of Scripture expoſition ſo far as I have any acquaintance with it. *Interpretis officium eſt, non quid ipſe velit, ſed quid ſentiat ille quem interpretatur, exponere. Hieron. Apol. Adv. Ruffin.* For when the mind is really affected with the diſcovery of Truth it ſelf, it will be guided and directed in the declaration of it unto others.

(4.) The whole courſe of ſpeech, eſpecially in the *New Teſtament* is accommodated unto the nature, uſe and propriety of that Language, as expreſſed in other Authors, who wrote therein, and had a perfect underſtanding of it. From them therefore is the proper uſe and ſenſe of the words, Phraſes, and expreſſions in the New

New Teſtament much to be learned. This no man can make a Judgment of in a due manner, but he that is *skilled* in that Language as uſed and delivered by them: not that I think a *Commentary* on the *New Teſtament* may be collected out of *Euſtathius*, *Heſychius*, *Phavorinus*, *Julius Pollux* and other *Gloſſaries* from whoſe *Grammaticiſmes* and *Vocabularys*, ſome do countenance themſelves in curious and bold conjectures; nor from the likeneſs of expreſſions in *Claſſick* Authours; this only I ſay, that it is of ſingular advantage in the Interpretation of the Scripture, that a man be well acquainted with the *Original Languages*, and be able to examine the uſe and ſignification of words, Phraſes and expreſſions, as they are applied and declared in other Authours. And even to the underſtanding of the *Greek of the New Teſtament*, it is neceſſary that a man have an acquaintance with the *Hebrew* of the Old. For although I do not judge that there are ſuch a number of *Hebraiſms* in it, in a ſuppoſed diſcovery whereof conſiſts no ſmall part of ſome mens *critical Obſervations*; ſo I readily grant that there is ſuch a *Cognation* and *Alliance* in and between the ſenſes of the one and the other,

as that a due comparing of their expreſſions, doth mutually contribute light and perſpicuity unto them.

By theſe things great advantage may be obtained unto the right underſtanding of the ſenſe of the Scripture, or the mind of the Holy Ghoſt therein. For there is no other ſenſe in it then what is contained in the words, whereof *materially* it doth conſiſt, though really that ſenſe it ſelf be ſuch as our minds cannot receive without the eſpecial divine Aſſiſtance before pleaded. And in the Interpretation of the mind of any one, it is neceſſary that the *words* he ſpeakes or writes be rightly underſtood. And this we cannot do immediately unleſs we underſtand the *Language* wherein he ſpeaks, as alſo the *Idiotiſms* of that Language, with the common uſe and intention of its *Phraſeologie* and expreſſions. And if we do not hereby come unto a perfect comprehenſion of the ſenſe intended, becauſe many other things are required thereunto, yet an hindrance is removed, without which we cannot do ſo, occaſions of manifold miſtakes are taken away, and the cabinet is as it were unlocked, wherein the Jewel of Truth lies hid, which with a lawful diligent ſearch may be found. And what

what Perplexities, miſtakes and errors the Ignorance of theſe *Original Languages* hath caſt many expoſitors into both of old and of late, eſpecially among thoſe who pertinaciouſly adhere unto *one Tranſlation*, and that none of the beſt, might be manifeſted by Inſtances undeniable and that without number. Such is that of the Gloſs on *Tit.* 3. 10. *Hæreticum hominem de vita*; which adds as its expoſition; *tolle*. And thoſe among our ſelves who are leſs skilled in this knowledg, are to he adviſed, that they would be careful not to adventure on any *ſingular expoſition of the Scriptures*, or any *Text* in them, upon the credit of any one or all Tranſlations they can make uſe of, ſeeing Perſons of greater name and worth then to be mentioned unto their diſreputation, have miſcarried upon the ſame account. A Reverential Subjection of mind, and diligent attendance unto the *Analogy of Faith* is their beſt preſervative in this matter. And I fear not to add, that a *Superficial Knowledg in theſe Tongues*, which many aim at, is of little uſe, unleſs it be to make men *adventurous* in betraying their own ignorance. But the ſenſe and ſubſtance of the Scripture being contained entirely in every *good Tranſlation*, (amongſt

which that in uſe among our ſelves is *excellent*, though capable of great improvements) men may by the uſe of the means before directed unto, and under the conduct of the Teaching of the Spirit of God in them, uſefully and rightly expound the Scripture in general, unto the edification of others, whereof many Inſtances may be given amongſt antient and modern expoſitors.

This *Skill and Knowledg* therefore is of great uſe unto them who are called unto the Interpretation of the Scripture. And the Church of God hath had no ſmall advantage by the endeavours of men *learned* herein, who have exerciſed it in the expoſition of the words and *Phraſeology* of the Scriptures, as compared with their uſe in other Authours. But yet, as was before obſerved, this skill and the exerciſe of it, in the way mentioned, is no *Duty* in it ſelf, nor enjoyned unto any for its own ſake, but only hath a *Goodneſs* in it with reſpect unto a certain end. Wherefore it is in its own nature *indifferent*, and in its utmoſt improvement capable of *abuſe*; and ſuch in late daies it hath fallen under, unto a great extremity. For the ſtudy of the *Original Languages*, and the exerciſe

of

of skill in them, in the Intepretation of the Scripture, hath been of great reputation and that deſervedly. Hence multitudes of learned men have ingaged themſelves in that work and ſtudy, and the number of *Annotations* and *Comments* on the Scripture conſiſting principally in *Critical Obſervations* as they are called, have been greatly encreaſed. And they are utter ſtangers unto theſe things, who will not allow that many of them are of ſingular uſe. But withal, this skill and faculty where it hath been unaccompanied with that humility, ſobriety, reverence of the Authour of the Scripture, and reſpect unto the *Analogie of Faith*, which ought to bear ſway in the minds of all men who undertake to expound the Oracles of God, may be, and hath been greatly abuſed unto the hurt of its owners, and diſadvantage of the Church.

For (1.) by ſome it hath been turned into the fewel of Pride, and a noyſome elation of mind. Yea experience ſhews that this *kind of Knowledg* where it is ſuppoſed ſignal, is of all others the moſt apt to puff up and ſwell the vain minds of men, unleſs it be where it is allayed with a ſingular modeſty of nature, or the mind it

ſelf be ſufficiently corrected and changed by grace. Hence the expreſſions of Pride and ſelf-conceit which ſome have broken forth into on an imagination of their skill and faculty in *Criticizing* on the Scriptures, have been ridiculous and impious. The Holy Ghoſt uſually teacheth not ſuch Perſons, neither ſhould I expect to learn much from them relating unto the Truth as it is in Jeſus. But yet the *ſtones* they digg may be made uſe of by a *skilfull* builder.

(2.) In many it hath been accompanied with a noxious *prophane curioſity*. Every Tittle and Apex ſhall give them occaſion for *fruitleſs conjectures*, as vain for the moſt part as thoſe of the *Cabbaliſtical Jews*. And this humour hath filled us with *needleſs* and *futilous* obſervations, which, beyond an oſtentation of the Learning of their Authours (indeed the utmoſt end whereunto they are deſigned) are of no uſe nor conſideration. But this is not all; ſome men from hence have been prompted unto a boldneſs in adventuring to *corrupt the Text* it ſelf, or the plain ſenſe of it. For what elſe is done when men for an oſtentation of their skill, will produce quotations out of *learned Authours*, to illuſtrate

luſtrate or expound ſayings in the Scripture, wherein there ſeems to be ſome kind of compliance in words and ſounds, when their ſenſes are adverſe and contrary. Amongſt a thouſand inſtances which might be given to exemplify this folly and confidence, we need take that one alone of him, who to explain or illuſtrate that ſaying of *Hezekiah*, *Good is the Word of the Lord which thou haſt ſpoken; he ſaid moreover, for there ſhall be Peace and Truth in my daies*, *Iſa.* 39. 8. Subjoyns, ἐμῶ θανόντι γαῖα μιχθήτω πυρί; So comparing that holy mans ſubmiſſion and ſatisfaction in the Peace of the Church with Truth, and the *blaſphemous imprecation* of an impious wretch for confuſion on the World, when once he ſhould be got out of it. And ſuch notable ſayings are many of our *late Criticks* farced withal.

And the confidence of ſome hath fallen into greater exceſſes, and hath ſwelled over theſe bounds alſo. To countenance their conjectures and ſelf-pleaſing imaginations, from whence they expect no ſmall reputation for skill and Learning, they fall in *upon the Text* it ſelf. As indeed we are come into an Age wherein many ſeem to judge that they can neither ſufficiently value

value themſelves, nor obtain an eſtimation in the World, without ſome bold ſallys of *curioſity* or *novelty* into the vitals of Religion, with reflection of contempt and ſcorn on all that are otherwiſe minded, as perſons uncapable of comprehending their Attainments. Hence it is that amongſt our ſelves we have ſcarce any thing left *unattacqued* in the Doctrine of the reformed Churches, and of that in *England* as in former days; neither ſhall he be with many eſteemed a man either of Parts, Learning, or Judgment, who hath not ſome *new curious Opinion* or *Speculation* differing from what hath been formerly commonly taught and received, although the Univerſality of theſe renowned notions among us, are but corrupt Emanations from *Socinianiſme* or *Arminianiſme* on the one hand, or from *Popery* on the other.

But it is men of another ſort, and in Truth of another manner of Learning, then the preſent corrupters of the Doctrines of the Goſpel, (who ſo far as I can perceive trouble not themſelves about the Scripture much one way or another) that we treat about. They are ſuch as in the exerciſe of the skill and ability under conſi-

deration,

deration, do fall in upon the *Scripture* it ſelf, to make way for the advancement of their own conjectures, whereof *ten thouſand* are not of the leaſt importance, compared with the Duty and neceſſity of preſerving the ſacred Text inviolate, and the juſt and due perſwaſion that ſo it hath been preſerved. For firſt, they command the *vowels and Accents* of the *Hebrew* Text out of their way, as things wherein they are not concerned, when the uſe of them in any one page of the Scripture, is *incomparably* of more worth and uſe, then all that they are or ever will be of, in the Church of God. And this is done on ſlight *conjectures*. And if this ſuffice not to make way for their deſigns, then *letters and words* themſelves muſt be corrected, upon an unproveable ſuppoſition, that the *Original Text hath been changed or corrupted*. And the boldneſs of ſome herein is grown intollerable, ſo that it is as likely means for the Introduction and Promotion of *Atheiſme*, as any engine the Devil hath ſet on work in theſe daies wherein he is ſo openly ingaged in that deſign.

There are alſo ſundry other waies whereby this great help unto the underſtanding and Interpretation of the Scripture, may be

be and hath been abuſed; thoſe mentioned may ſuffice as inſtances confirming our Obſervations. Wherefore as *Subſtantial* knowledg and skill in the *Originals* is uſeful and indeed neceſſary unto him that is called unto the expoſition of the Scripture, ſo in the uſe and exerciſe of it ſundry things ought to be well conſidered by them who are furniſhed therewithal. As (1.) That the thing it ſelf is *no Grace*, nor any peculiar *Gift* of the Holy Ghoſt, but a meer *fruit of diligence*, upon a common furniture with natural Abilities. And nothing of this nature is in ſacred things to be reſted on, or much truſted unto. (2.) That the *exerciſe of this skill* in and about the Scripture is not in it ſelf as ſuch an *eſpecial or immediate Duty*. Were it ſo, there would be *eſpecial Grace promiſed* to fill it up and quicken it. For all *Goſpel Duties* are animated by Grace in their due performance: that is, thoſe who do ſo perform them have eſpecial aſſiſtance in their ſo doing. But it is reduced unto the general head of Duty with reſpect unto the end aimed at. Wherefore (3.) The *Bleſſing of God* on our endeavours, ſucceeding and proſpering of them, as in other natural and civil occaſions of life, is all that we expect herein from

from the Holy Spirit. And (4.) Sundry other things are required of us, if we hope for this Bleſſing on juſt Grounds. It may be ſome ignorant perſons are ſo fond as to imagin that if they could underſtand the *Original Languages*, they muſt of neceſſity underſtand the ſenſe of the Scripture. And there is nothing more frequent then for ſome, who either truely or falſely pretend a skill in them, to bear themſelves high againſt thoſe who perhaps are really more acquainted with the mind of the Holy Ghoſt in the word then themſelves, as though *all things were plain and obvious unto them*, others knowing nothing but by them, or ſuch as they are. But this is but one means of many that is uſeful to this purpoſe, and that ſuch, as if it be alone, is of little or no uſe at all. It is fervent Prayer, Humility, Lowlineſs of mind, Godly Fear and Reverence of the word, and ſubjection of conſcience unto the Authority of every Tittle of it, a conſtant attendance unto the *Analogie* of Faith, with due dependance on the Spirit of God for ſupplies of Light and Grace, which muſt make this or any other means of the ſame nature effectual.

An Acquaintance with the *History and Geography of the World*, and with *Chronology*, I reckon alſo among *Diſciplinarian* Aids in the Interpretation of the Scripture. For as time is divided into what is paſt, and what is to come, ſo there are ſundry things in the Scripture which in all ſeaſons relate thereunto. For (firſt) God hath therein given us an account of the courſe and order of all things, (which the *Jews* call סדר עולם) from the foundation of the World. And this he did for Sundry important Reaſons, as incident with the general end of the Scripture. For hereby hath he ſecured the Teſtimony that he hath given to his Being, Power and Providence by the *creation* and Rule of all things. The evidences in them given thereunto, are thoſe which are principally attacqued by *Atheiſts*. And although they do ſufficiently manifeſt and evince their own Teſtimony unto the common Reaſon of mankind, yet ſundry things relating unto them are ſo involved in darkneſs, and inextricable circumſtances, as if all their concernments had not been plainly declared in the Scripture, the wiſeſt of men had been at a great loſs about them; and ſo were they alwaies who wanted the Light and advantage hereof. But here

here as he hath plainly declared the *Original Emanation* of all things from his eternal Power, ſo hath he teſtified unto his conſtant Rule over all in all Times, Places, Ages and Seaſons, by inſtances incontroulable. Therein hath he treaſured up all ſorts of examples, with ſuch impreſſions of his Goodneſs, Patience, Power, Wiſdom, Holineſs and Righteouſneſs upon them, as proclaim his Almighty and Righteous Government of the whole univerſe. And in the whole he hath delivered unto us ſuch a *tract and ſeries of the Ages of the World*, from its beginning, as *Atheiſme* hath no tollerable pretence, from Tradition, Teſtimony, or the evidence of things themſelves, to break in upon. Whatever is objected againſt the beginning of all things, and the courſe of their continuance in the World delivered unto us in the Scripture, which is ſecured not only by the Authority of divine Revelation, but alſo by an univerſal evidence of all circumſtances, is fond and ridiculous. I ſpeak of the account given us in general, ſufficient unto its own ends, and not of any mens *Deductions* and applications of it unto minute portions of time, which probably it was not deſigned unto. It is ſufficient unto its end, that its

account

account in general, which confounds all *Atheiſtical* preſumptions, is not to be impeached. And although the Authority of the Scripture is not to be pleaded immediately againſt *Atheiſts*, yet the matter and Reaſon of it is, which from its own evidence renders all contrary pretenſions contemptible.

2*dly*. God hath hereby given an account of the *Biginning*, *Progreſs*, *Trials*, *Faith*, *Obedience*, and whole proceeding of the Church in the purſuit of the firſt Promiſe, unto the actual exhibition of Jeſus Chriſt in the fleſh. Hereunto were all things in a Tendency for *four thouſand years*. It is a glorious proſpect we have therein, to ſee the call and foundation of the Church in the firſt Promiſe given unto our common Parents; what additions of light and Knowledg he granted unto it ſucceſſively by new Revelations and Promiſes; how he gradually adorned it with Gifts, Priviledges and Ordinances; what waies and means he uſed to preſerve it in Faith, Purity and Obedience; how he chaſtened, tried, puniſhed and delivered it; how he dealt with the nations of the World with reſpect unto it, raiſing them up for its affliction, and deſtroying them for their cruelty and oppreſſion

oppreſſion of it; whatwere the waies of wicked and ſinful men amongſt them, or in it, and what the Graces and fruits of his Saints, how by his Power he retrieved it out of various calamities, and preſerved it againſt all oppoſition unto its appointed ſeaſon; all which with innumerable other effects of divine Wiſdom and Grace, are bleſſedly repreſented unto us therein.

Now beſides that ſpiritual wiſdom and inſight into the great deſign of God in Chriſt, which is required unto a right underſtanding in theſe things, as they were *Types* of better things to come, and examples of Goſpel Mytteries; there is a skill and underſtanding in the Records and monuments of time, the *Geographical* reſpect of one nation unto another, the *Periods* and Revolutions of ſeaſons and Ages required, to apprehend them aright in their firſt literal inſtance and intention. And beſides what is thus *Hiſtorically* related in the Scripture, there are *Propheſies* alſo of things to come in the Church, and amongſt the nations of the World, which are great evidences of its own Divinity, and ſupporting arguments of our Faith. But without ſome good apprehenſion of the *diſtinction of times*, *ſeaſons* and *places*, no man can rightly judge of their accompliſhment.

Secondly, there are, in particular, prophesies in the Old Testament which reach unto the times of the Gospel, upon the Truth whereof the whole Scripture doth depend. Such are those concerning the *calling of the Gentiles*, the *Rejection* and Recovery of the *Jews*, the erection of the glorious Kingdom of Christ in the World, with the oppositions that should be made unto it. And to these many are added in the new Testament it self, as *Math.* 24.25. 2 *Thess.* 2. 1 *Tim.* 4.1,2,3. 2 *Tim.* 3,1,2,3. Chap. 4. 3. But especially in the whole Book of the *Revelation*, wherein the state of the Church and of the World are foretold unto the consummation of all things. And how can any man arrive unto a tolerable acquaintance with the *accomplishment of these Prophesies* as to what is already past, or have a distinct grounded expectation of the fulfilling of what remains foretold, without a prospect into the state of things in the world, the Revolutions of times past with what fell out in them, which are the things spoken of? Those who treat of them without it, do but feign *Chimera*'s to themselves, as men in the dark are apt to do, or corrupt the word of God, by turning it into senseless and sulsome *Allegories*. And those, on the other

ther ſide, by whom theſe things are wholly *neglected*, do deſpiſe the wiſdom and care of God towards the Church, and diſregard a bleſſed means of our Faith and conſolation.

Some things of this nature, eſpecially ſuch as relate unto *Chronological computations*, I acknowledg are attended with great and apparently inextricable difficulties. But the skill and Knowledg mentioned will guide humble and modeſt enquirers into ſo ſufficient a ſatisfaction in general, and as unto all things which are really uſeful, that they ſhall have no Temptation to queſtion the verity of what in particular they cannot aſſoyle. And it is an *intolerable Pride and Folly* where we are guided and ſatisfied infallibly in a thouſand things, which we know no otherwiſe, to queſtion the Authority of the whole, becauſe we cannot comprehend one or two particulars which perhaps were never intended to be reduced unto our meaſure. Beſides, as the Inveſtigation of theſe things is attended with difficulties, ſo the Ignorance of them or miſtakes about them, whilſt the minds of men are free from pertinacy and a Spirit of contention, are of no great *diſadvantage*. For they have very little influence on our Faith and Obedience, any otherwiſe then

that we call not into queſtion what is revealed. And it is moſt probable that the Scripture never intended to give us ſuch *minute Chronological Determinations*, as ſome would deduce their computations unto, and that becauſe not neceſſary. Hence we ſee that ſome who have laboured therein unto a *prodigy of Induſtry* and Learning, although they have made ſome uſeful diſcoveries, yet have never been able to give ſuch evidence unto their *computations*, as that others would acquieſce in them; but by all their endeavours have adminiſtred occaſion of *new ſtrife* and contention, about things it may be of no great importance to be known or determined. And in general men have run into two extreams in theſe things; For ſome pretend to frame an *exact computation* and *conſent of times* from the Scripture alone, without any regard unto the Records, Monuments, Hiſtories and *ſignatures* of times in the world. Wherever theſe appear in oppoſition or contradiction unto the *chain* and *links* of time which they have framed to themſelves (as they ſuppoſe from the Scripture) they reject them as matters of no conſideration. And it were well if they could do this unto ſatisfaction. But how evidently they have failed herein, as for inſtance in the computation

tation of *Daniels weeks* wherein they will allow but 490 years from the *firſt of Cyrus unto the Death of our Saviour*, contrary to the common conſent of mankind about things that fell out, and their continuance, between thoſe ſeaſons, taking up 562 years, is manifeſt unto all. The Scripture indeed is to be made the only *ſacred ſtandard* and meaſure of things in its proper ſenſe and underſtanding; nor is any thing to be eſteemed of, which riſeth up in contradiction thereunto. But as a due conſideration of *forraign Teſtimonies* and Monuments doth ofttimes give great light unto what is more generally or obſcurely expreſſed in the Scripture; ſo where the Scripture in theſe things, with ſuch allowances as it every where declares it ſelf to admit of, may be interpreted in a fair compliance with *uncontrouled forraign Teſtimonies*, that Interpretation is to be embraced. The Queſtion is not therefore, whether we ſhall regulate the computation of times by the Scripture, or Hiſtories and marks of time in the World; but whether, when the ſenſe of the Scripture is *obſcure* in thoſe things, and its determination only general, ſo as to be equally capable of various ſenſes, that (all other things being alike) is not to be preferred which agrees with the *un-*

doubted Monuments of times in the Nations of the World. For inſtance, the Angel *Gabriel* acquaints *Daniel* that from the going forth of the Commandment to reſtore and build *Jeruſalem*, unto *Meſſiah the* Prince and his cutting off, ſhould be *Seuenty weeks*, (to ſpeak only of the whole number in general) that is, 490 *yeares*; now there were ſundry Commandments given, or decrees made by the Kings of *Perſia* who are intended, to this purpoſe; of theſe two were the moſt famous, the one granted by *Cyrus* in the firſt *year of his Empire*, *Ezra.* 1. 1. The other by *Artaxerxes* in the 7th year of his *Reign*, *Ezra.* 7. 12, 13, 14. Between the firſt of theſe and the death of Chriſt there muſt be allowed 562 yeers, unleſs you will offer violence unto all Monuments, Records, and circumſtances of times in the World. It is therefore ſafer to interpret the general words of the Angel of the *latter Decree* or Commandment, whoſe circumſtances alſo make it more probable to be intended, wherein the ſpaces of time mentioned falls in exactly with other approved *Hiſtories* and Records. Neither would I diſallow another computation, which contending for the firſt *decree of Cyrus* to be the beginning of the time mentioned, and allowing the whole ſpace from thence

thence to be really 562 years, affirms that the Scripture excludes the consideration of the years *supernumerary* to the 490, because of the Interruptions which at several seasons were put upon the people, in the accomplishment of the things foretold for so many years, which some suppose to be signified by the distribution of the whole number of 70 *weeks*, into *seven, sixty two and one*, each of which fractions hath its proper work belonging unto it. For this computation offers no *violence* either to sacred, or unquestionable humane Authority.

But on the other extream, some there are who observing the difficulties in these accounts, as expressed in the Scripture from the beginning; having framed another *series of things* to themselves, openly divers from that exhibited therein, and raked together from other Authours, some things giving countenance unto their conjectures, do prophanely make bold to break in upon the *Original Text*, accusing it of *imperfection* or *corruption*, which they will rectify by their *fine inventions*, and the aid of a *Translation*, known to be mistaken in a *thousand places*, and in some justly suspected of wilful depravations. But this presumptuous confidence is nothing but an

emanation from that *flood of Atheiſm* which is breaking in on the world in theſe declining *Ages* of it.

The third Aid or Aſſiſtance of this kind is a skill in the *waies and methods of reaſoning*, which are ſuppoſed to be common unto the Scriptures with other writings. And this, as it is an *Art*, or an *Artificial faculty*, like thoſe other means before mentioned, is capable of a right improvement, or of being abuſed. An *Ability to judge of the ſenſe of Propoſitions*, how one thing depends on another, how it is deduced from it, follows upon it, or is proved by it, what is the deſign of him that writes or ſpeaks in any Diſcourſe or Reaſonings, how it is propoſed, confirmed, illuſtrated, is neceſſary unto any rational conſideration to be exerciſed about whatever is ſo propoſed unto us. And when the minds of men are confirmed in a good *habit of Judgment by the Rules of the Art of Reaſoning*, about the ordinary waies and Methods of it, it is of great advantage in the *Inveſtigation of the ſenſe* of any writer even of the Scripture it ſelf. And thoſe ordinarily who ſhall undertake the Interpretation of any *ſeries of Scripture* diſcourſe, without ſome ability in this Science, will find themſelves oftentimes *entangled* and at a loſs, where by vertue of

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it they might be at liberty and free. And many of the *Rules* which are commonly given about the Interpretation of the Scripture, as namely, that the *Scope* of the *Authour* in the place is duely to be conſidered, as alſo things *antecedent* and *conſequent* to the place and words to be interpreted, and the like, are but directions for the due uſe of this *Skill* or faculty.

But this alſo muſt be admitted with its limitations. For whatever perfection there ſeems to be in our Art of reaſoning, it is to be ſubjected to the Wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt in the Scripture. His way of Reaſoning is alwaies his own, ſometimes *Sublime* and *heavenly*, ſo as not to be reduced unto the common Rules of our Arts and Sciences, without a derogation from its *inſtructive*, *convictive*, and *perſwaſive* efficacy. For us to frame unto our ſelves *Rules of Ratiocination*, or to have our minds embondaged unto thoſe of other mens invention and obſervation, if we think thereon abſolutely to reduce all the Reaſonings in the Scripture unto them, we may fall into a preſumptuous miſtake. In the conſideration of all effects of infinite Wiſdom there muſt be an allowance for the deficiency of our comprehenſion, when humble ſubjection of conſcience, and the captiva-

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ting of our understandings to the Obedience of Faith, is the best means of learning what is proposed unto us. And there is nothing more contemptible then the *Arrogancy* of such Persons, who think by the shallow measures and short lines of their own weak, dark, imperfect Reasonings, to fathom the depths of Scripture senses.

Again; What sense soever any man supposeth or judgeth this or that particular place of Scripture to yield and give out to the best of his rational intelligence, is immediately to give place unto the *Analogie of Faith*, that is the Scriptures own declaration of its sense in other places, to another purpose or contrary thereunto. The want of attending unto mens duty herein, with a *mixture of Pride and Pertinacy*, is the occasion of most errors and noxious Opinions in the World. For when some have taken up a *private Interpretation* of any place of Scripture, if before they have throughly imbibed and vented it, they do not submit their conceptions, although they seem to be greatly satisfied in it and full of it, unto the Authority of the Scripture in the declaration of its own mind in other places, there is but small hope of their recovery. And this is that Pride which is the sourse and Original of *Heresy*; namely

namely, when men will prefer their *seemingly wise* and rational conceptions of the sense of *particular places*, before the *Analogie* of Faith.

Moreover there is a pernitious mistake that some are fallen into about these things. They suppose that taking in the help of *skill in the Original Languages* for the understanding of the words and their use, whether proper or figurative, that there is nothing more necessary to the understanding and interpretation of the Scripture, but only *the sedulous and diligent use of our own Reason*, in the ordinary way, and according to the common Rules of the *Art of Ratiocination*. For what, say they, can be more required, or what can men more make use of? By these means alone do we come to understand the meaning of any other *Writer*, and therefore also of the Scripture. Neither can we, nor doth God require, that we should receive or believe any thing but according to our own Reason and understandings. But these things, though in themselves they are, some of them, partly true, yet as they are used unto the end mentioned, they are pernitiously false. For (1.) It greatly unbecometh any Christian once to suppose that there is need *of no other assistance*, nor the use of any other means for the Interpretation

terpretation of the Oracles of God, or to come unto the understanding of the *hidden Wisdom of God in the mystery of the Gospel*, then is to the understanding or Interpretation of the Writings of men, which are the product of a finite, limited and weak ability. Were it not for some secret Perswasion that the Scripture indeed is not what it pretends to be, *the Word of the Living God*, or that it doth not indeed express the *highest effect of his* Wisdom, and deepest counsel of his will, it could not be that men should give way to such foolish imaginations. The principal matter of the Scripture is *Mysterious*, and the mysteries of it are laid up therein by God himself, and that in a way *inimitable* by the skill or Wisdom of men. When we speak of, and express the same things according unto our measure of comprehension, wherein from its agreement with the Scripture, what we say is *materially divine*, yet our words are not so, nor is there the same respect to the things themselves, as the expressions of the Scripture have, which are *formally* divine. And can we our selves trace these paths of Wisdom without his especial Guidance and Assistance? It is highly *Atheistical* once to fancy it. (2) We treat of such an Interpretation of the Scripture

Scripture as is *real*, and is accompanied with an underſtanding of the things propoſed and expreſſed; and not meerly of the *notional ſenſe of Propoſitions and Expreſſions*. For we ſpeak of ſuch an Interpretation of the Scripture as is a ſanctified means of our *Illumination*; nor any other doth either the Scripture require, or God regard. That to give in this unto us, notwithſtanding the uſe and advantage of all outward helps and means, is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God, hath been before demonſtrated. It is true, we can receive nothing, reject nothing as to what is true or falſe, nor conceive the ſenſe of any thing but by our own *Reaſons* and Underſtandings. But the Enquiry herein is, what *ſupernatural Aid and Aſſiſtance* our minds and natural Reaſons ſtand in need of, to enable them to receive and underſtand aright things ſpiritual and ſupernatural. And if it be true, that no more is required unto the due Underſtanding and Interpretation of the Scriptures, but the exerciſe of our *own Reaſons*, in and by the helps mentioned, namely, *skill in the Original Languages, the Arts of Ratiocination*, and the like, which are expoſed unto all in common, according to the meaſure of their natural Abilities and Diligence, then is the ſenſe of the Scripture,

Scripture, that is, the Mind of God and Christ therein, *equally discernable*, or to be attained unto by all sorts of men, good and bad, holy and prophane, believers and unbelievers, those who obey the Word, and those who despise it; which is contrary to all the Promises of God, and innumerable other Testimonies of Scripture.

CHAP. IX.

Helps Ecclesiastical in the Interpretation of the Scripture.

THirdly, There are means and helps for the Interpretation of the Scripture, which I call *Ecclesiastical*. Those I intend which we are supplied withall by the *Ministry of the Church*, in all Ages. And they may be referred unto three heads, under which their usefulness to this purpose is pleaded. As (1.) *Catholick or Universal Tradition.* (2.) *Consent of the Fathers.* (3.) *The endeavours of any persons holy and learned*, who have gone before us in the Investigation of the Truth, and expresst their minds in writing, for the Edification of others, whether of *old* or of *late*. These things belong unto the Ministry of the Church, and so far as they do so are sanctified

fied Ordinances for the communication of the Mind of God unto us,

(1.) It is pleaded by ſome that the Scripture is to be interpreted according to *Catholick Tradition* and no otherwiſe. And I do acknowledg that we ſhould be inexpreſſibly obliged to them who would give us an Interpretation of the *whole Scripture*, or of any *Book in the Scripture*, or of any *one paſſage* in the Scripture relating unto things of meer ſupernatural Revelation, according unto that *Rule*, or by the Guidance and Direction of it. But I fear no ſuch Tradition can be evidenced, unleſs it be of things manifeſt in the light of nature, whoſe univerſal preſervation is an effect of the unavoidable Reaſon of mankind, and not of any *Eccleſiaſtical* Tradition. Moreover the Scripture it ſelf is teſtified unto unanimouſly and uninterruptedly by all Chriſtians to be the Word of God; and hereby are all divine Truths conveyed down from their Original and delivered unto us. But a *Collateral Tradition* of any one Truth or Doctrin beſides, from Chriſt & the Apoſtles cannot be proved. And if it could be ſo, it would be no means of the Interpretation of the Scripture, but only *objectively*, as one place of Scripture interprets another; that is, it would belong unto the *Analogie of Faith*

Faith, contrary to which, or in oppoſition whereunto, no place ought to be interpreted. To pretend this therefore to be the Rule of the Interpretation of Scripture *actively*, as though thereby we could certainly learn the meaning of it in *part or in whole*, is fond. Nor, whatever ſome do boaſt of, can any man living prove his Interpretation of any one place, to be dictated by, or to be ſuitable unto *Univerſal Tradition*, any otherwiſe but as he can prove it to be agreeable to the *Scripture* it ſelf; unleſs we ſhall acknowledg without proof, that what is the mind and ſenſe of ſome men who call themſelves the Church at preſent, was the Mind of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and of all true Believers ſince, and that infallibly it is ſo. But this pretence hath been abundantly and ſufficiently diſproved, though nothing ſeems to be ſo, to the minds of men fortified againſt all evidences of Truth by invincible prejudices.

2. The *joynt conſent of the Fathers* or antient Doctors of the Church is alſo pretended as a Rule of Scripture Interpretation. But thoſe who make this *Plea* are apparently influenced by their ſuppoſed intreſt ſo to do. No man of ingenuity, who hath ever read or conſidered them or any of them

them with attention and judgment can abide by this pretence. For it is utterly impossible they should be an *Authentick Rule* unto others, who so disagree among themselves, as they will be found to do, not it may be so much in *Articles of Faith*, as in their *exposition of Scripture*, which is the matter under consideration. About the former they express themselves diversly, in the latter they *really differ*, and that frequently. Those who seem most earnestly to press this *Dogme* upon us, are those of the *Church of Rome*. And yet it is hard to find one learned man among them, who hath undertaken to expound or write *Commentaries* on the Scripture, but on all occasions he gives us the different senses, expositions and Interpretations of the Fathers, of the same places and Texts; and that where any difficulty occurs in a manner perpetually. But the pretence of the *Authoratative Determination* of the *Fathers* in points of Religion, hath been so disproved, and the vanity of it so fully discovered, as that it is altogether needless farther to insist upon it. And those who would seem to have found out a middle way, between their *determining Authority* on the one hand, and the *efficacy* of their *Reasons*, with a due veneration of their Piety and Ability, which all

ſober men allow, on the other, do but triſle and ſpeak words, whoſe ſenſe neither themſelves nor any other do underſtand.

3. We ſay therefore that the ſole uſe of *Eccleſiaſtical means* in the Interpretation of the Scripture, is in the due conſideration and improvement of that *Light*, *Knowledg*, *Underſtanding* in, and thoſe *Gifts*, for the declaration of the Mind of God in the Scripture, which he hath granted unto, and furniſhed them withal, who have gone before us in the *Miniſtry* and work of the Goſpel. For as God in an eſpecial manner in all Ages took care that the Doctrine of the Goſpel ſhould be preached *viva voce*, to the preſent edification of the body of the Church; ſo likewiſe almoſt from the beginning of its propagation in the World, preſently after the deceaſe of the Apoſtles, and that whole divinely inſpired ſociety of Preachers and Writers, he ſtirred up and enabled ſundry perſons to declare by *writing* what their apprehenſions were, and what *underſtanding* God had given them in and about the ſenſe of the Scripture. Of thoſe who deſignedly wrote Comments and Expoſitions on any part of the Scripture *Origen* was the firſt, whoſe fooleries and miſtakes occaſioned by the prepoſſeſſion of his mind with *Platonical Philoſophy*, confidence of his own

own great Abilities, (which indeed were ſingular and admirable) with the curioſity of a ſpeculative mind, diſcouraged not others from endeavouring with more ſobriety and better ſucceſs to write entire Expoſitions on ſome parts of the Scripture; ſuch among the Greeks were *Chriſoſtom*, *Theodoret*, *Aretine*, *Oecomenius*, *Theophylact*; and among the Latines *Hierom*, *Ambroſe*, *Auſtin*, and others. Theſe have been followed, uſed, improved, by others innumerable in ſucceeding Ages. Eſpecially ſince the Reformation hath the work been carried on with general ſucceſs, and to the great advantage of the Church. Yet hath it not proceeded ſo far, but that the beſt, moſt uſeful and profitable labour in the Lords Vineyard, which any holy and learned man can ingage himſelf in, is to endeavour the contribution of farther Light in the opening & expoſition of Scripture, or any part thereof. Now all theſe are ſingular helps and advantages unto the right underſtanding of the Scripture, of the ſame kind of advantage, as to that ſingle End of Light and knowledge, which Preaching of the Word is, uſed with ſobriety, judgment, and a due examination of all by the Text it ſelf. For the *Expoſition of the Fathers*, as it is a ridiculous Imagination, and that which would oblige us to the belief of contradictions, and open

miſtakes, for any man to *authenticate* them ſo far as to bind us up unto an aſſent unto their conceptions and dictates becauſe they are theirs: ſo they will not be deſpiſed by any, but ſuch as have not been converſant in them. And it is eaſie to diſcern from them all, by the diverſity of their gifts, waies and deſigns, in the Expoſition of Scripture, that the holy Spirit *divided unto them as he pleaſed*; which as it ſhould make us reverence his preſence with them, and aſſiſtance of them, ſo it calls for the freedom of our own Judgments to be exerciſed about their conceptions. And for thoſe of *latter* daies, though the names of the principal and moſt eminent of them, as *Bucer*, *Calvin*, *Martyr*, *Beza*, are now contemned and deſpiſed by many, moſtly by thoſe who never once ſeriouſly attempted the expoſition of any one Chapter in the whole Scripture; yet thoſe who firmely deſign to grow in the Knowledg of God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, both do, and alwaies will bleſs God for the aſſiſtance he gave them in their great and holy works, and in the benefit which they receive by their labours. Theſe are the outward means and advantages which are requiſite and to be uſed, as any ones calling, opportunity, Ability, and work, do require, as helps to attain

attain a right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture. Now concerning them all I shall only say, that the Spirit of God makes them useful and prosperous according to the counsel of his own Will. Some are prone in the use of them, to lean unto their own understandings, and consequently to wander in and after the imaginations of their own minds, corrupting the Word of God, and endeavouring to pervert his right waies thereby. Others he leaves in the *shell of the Text* to exercise their skill about words, Phrases, and expressions, without leading of them into the Spiritual sense of the word, which is its life and Power. In some he blesseth them to the full and proper end, but not unless they are in a compliance with the spiritual means and duties before insisted on.

From what hath been discourst concerning the work of the Spirit of God in revealing unto Believers the mind of God in the Scriptures, or the sense of that *Revelation* made of it therein, two things will seem to follow. First, that those who have not that *assistance* granted to them, or that work of his wrought in them, cannot understand or apprehend the Truth or Doctrin of Faith and Obedience therein revealed. For if that work of the Spirit be necessary thereunto, which they are not made partakers of, how

can they come to any knowledge or understanding therein? Secondly, that those who are so influenced and guided, *must understand the whole Scripture aright*, and be freed from all mistakes in their conceptions about the mind of God; both which are contrary to the experience of all men in all Ages; seeing many persons visibly destitute of any saving work of the Holy Ghost upon their minds, as is evident in that no renovation of them, or reformation of life doth ensue thereon, have yet *attained a great acquaintance with the Truth* as it is revealed in the Word; and many who are *truly enlightened* and sanctified by him, do yet fall into sundry *errors* and mistakes, which the differences and divisions among themselves do openly proclaim. And the Scripture it self supposeth that there may be *diversity of Judgments* about spiritual things, among those who are really sanctified and Believers.

A brief Answer unto both these Exceptions will lead this discourse unto its close. I say therefore to the first; (1.) That there are in the declaration of the mind of God in the Scriptures sundry things that are *common unto other writings*, both as to the matter of them, and the manner of their delivery. Such are the *stories* of times past therein recorded, the *computation of times*, the use of words,

words, *phraſes of ſpeech*, *figurative* and *proper*, *artificial* connexions of diſcourſe, *various ſorts of Arguments*, and the like; all which perſons may come to the underſtanding of, and be able to make a right judgment concerning, without any eſpecial aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit, the things about which they are converſant being the proper object of the reaſonable faculties of the mind, provided there be a common bleſſing on their endeavours and exerciſe. (2.) The *main Doctrines* of Truth declared in the Scripture are propoſed in ſuch diſtinct, *plain Enuntiations*, in propoſitions accommodated unto the underſtandings of rational men, that perſons who in the uſe of *Diſciplinary* and *Eccleſiaſtical helps*, attend unto the ſtudy of them without prejudices, or prepoſſeſſion with falſe notions and opinions, with freedom from the bias of carnal or ſecular intereſts and advantages, and the leaven of Tradition, may learn, know and underſtand the ſenſe, meaning and truth of the Doctrines ſo propoſed and declared unto them, without any eſpecial work of *ſaving Illumination* on their minds. The Propoſitions of Truth in the Scripture, I mean thoſe which are neceſſary unto the great ends of the Scripture, are ſo plain and evident in themſelves, that it is the fault and

ſin of all men endued with rational abilities, if they perceive them not, and aſſent not unto them upon the evidence of their truth, or of the mind of God in thoſe places of Scripture wherein they are declared; which is the ſubſtance of what we plead concerning the *perſpicuity of the Scripture* againſt the *Papiſts*. (3.) Conſidering the *natural vanity* of the mind of man, its proneneſs to error and falſe imaginations, the weakneſs of Judgement wherewith it is in all things accompanied, whatever it attains in the knowledge of Truth is to be aſcribed unto the guidance of the Spirit of God, although not working in it or upon it by a communication of Saving Light and Grace. For (4.) The knowledge of Truth thus to be attained is not that *Illumination* which we are enquiring after, nor doth it produce thoſe effects of renewing the mind, and transforming it into the Image of the things known, with the fruits of holy obedience, which are inſeparable from ſaving Illumination.

In anſwer unto the ſecond pretended conſequence of what we have diſcourſed, I ſay (1.) That the Promiſe of the Spirit, and the communication of him accordingly, to *teach*, *inſtruct*, guide and lead us into Truth, is ſuited unto that *great end* for which God hath made the Revelation of himſelf in his Word;

Word; namely, that we might live unto him here according to his will, and be brought unto the enjoyment of him hereafter unto his glory. (2.) That unto this end it is not neceſſary that we ſhould underſtand the *direct ſenſe and meaning of any ſingle Text*, place or paſſage in the Scripture, nor yet that we ſhould obtain the knowledge of every thing revealed therein. It ſufficeth in anſwer to the Promiſe and deſign of the work of the Holy Ghoſt, that the *knowledge of all Truth* neceſſary to be known unto that end, be communicated unto us; and that we have ſo far a right underſtanding of the ſenſe of the Scripture, as to learn that Truth by the uſe of the means appointed unto that end. (3.) We are not hereby *abſolutely ſecured* from particular errors and miſtakes, no more then we are from all actual ſins, by the work of the Spirit on our wills; that of both kinds, whilſt we live in this world, being only in a tendency towards perfection. There is no faculty of our ſouls that is abſolutely and perfectly renewed in this life. But as the *Wills* of Believers are ſo far renewed and changed by Grace as to preſerve them from *ſuch ſins*, as are inconſiſtent with an holy life according to the Tenor of the Covenant, which yet leaves a poſſibility of many infirmities and actual ſins; ſo their *minds* are ſo far renewed as to know and aſſent to all Truths

necessary to our Life of Obedience, and a right understanding of the Scripture wherein they are revealed, which yet may be consistent with many mistakes, errors, and false apprehensions unto our great damage and disadvantage. But withall this must be added, that such are the Teachings of the Spirit of God, as to all Divine Truths whatever, both in the *Objective Revelation* of them in the Word, and in the *Assistance* he gives us by his Light and Grace to perceive and understand the mind and whole counsel of God in that Revelation, that it is not without our own *guilt*, as well as from our own *weakness*, that we fall into errors and misapprehensions about any Scripture Proposals that concern our duty to God. And if all that believe, would freely forgo all prejudices or preconceived opinions, and cast off all impressions from worldly considerations and secular advantages, giving themselves up humbly and entirely to the Teachings of God in the waies of his own appointment, some whereof have been before insisted on, we might all come *in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Ephes. 4. 13. And these things may suffice to illustrate the work of the Holy Ghost in our *Illumination* with respect unto the external objective causes thereof, or the holy Scripture it self.

There

There is yet another work of the Holy Ghoſt with reſpect unto the Scripture, which although it fall not directly under the preſent conſideration of the *waies and means of ſaving Illumination*, yet the whole of what we have diſcourſed is ſo reſolved into it in the order of an external cauſe, as that it may juſtly claim a remembrance in this place; And this is, his *watchful care over the written Word*, in preſerving it from deſtruction and corruption, from the firſt writing of it unto this very day. That it hath been under the eſpecial care of God, not only the event of its entire preſervation, conſidering the oppoſition it hath been expoſed unto, but alſo the Teſtimony of our Saviour, as to the *Books of the Old Teſtament*, then which thoſe of the New are certainly of no leſs eſteem or uſe, do ſufficiently evince, *Matth.* 5. 18. *Till Heaven and Earth paſs, one jot or tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the Law.* That by the *Law* the whole writings of the Old Teſtament are intended, the context doth declare. And what he affirms that it ſhall not by any means paſs away, that is, be aboliſhed or corrupted, that he taketh on himſelf to preſerve and ſecure. Two things the Scripture in it ſelf is ſubject unto; (1.) *Deſtruction* or *Abolition*, as unto the whole or any neceſſary part thereof. (2.) *Corruption of the Writing* by changes, alterations

tions and falſifications of the Copies of it. And by both of theſe it hath been attempted, and that both before and ſince the time of the promulgation of the Goſpel; the ſtories whereof are known. And yet is it come ſafe off from all, not only without *ruine*, but without *wound* or *blemiſh*. For any one to ſuppoſe that this hath been done by chance, or by the care of men alone, without the eſpecial watchful Providence, and powerful Actings of the Spirit of God, in the purſuit of the Promiſe of Chriſt that it ſhould not fail, which expreſſed a care that God had taken on himſelf to make good from the beginning, is not only to neglect the conſideration of the nature of all humane affairs, with the Revolutions that they are ſubject unto, and the deceit and violence wherewith the Scriptures have been attacqued, with the inſufficiency of the Powers and Diligence employed for their preſervation; but alſo to countenance *Atheiſtical Notions*, that God hath no eſpecial regard to his Word and Worſhip in the world. Indeed for a man to think and profeſs that the Scripture is the Word of God, given unto men for the ends which it ſelf declares, and of that uſe which it muſt be of in being ſo, and not believe that God hath alwaies taken, and doth take eſpecial care of its preſervation, and that in its purity

rity and integrity, beyond the ordinary waies of his Providence in the Rule of all other things, is to be ſottiſh and fooliſh, and to entertain thoughts of God, his Goodneſs, Wiſdom and Power, infinitely unworthy of him and them. There have of late been ſome Opinions concerning the *integrity and purity* of the Scriptures, invented and maintained, that I conceive take off from the reverence of that relation which the Scripture hath, in its integrity and purity, unto the care and glory of God. Hence it is by ſome maintained that ſome Books written by Divine Inſpiration, and given out unto the Church as part of its *Canon* or Rule of Faith and Obedience, are utterly loſt and periſhed. That the *Law* and *Scripture* of the Old Teſtament before the *Captivity*, were written though in the *Hebrew Tongue*, (which they ſay was not originally the Language of *Abraham* derived from *Heber*, but of the Poſterity of *Cham* in *Canaan*) yet not in the *Letters* or *Characters* which are now in uſe, but in thoſe which a few wicked Idolaters called *Samaritanes* did uſe and poſſeſs, being left unto them by *Ezra*, and new Characters invented by him, or borrowed from the *Caldeans* for the uſe of the Church. That the *Vowels and Accents*, whereby alone the true reading and ſenſe of it is preſerved, are a late

invention

invention of ſome *Maſorethical Rabbins*; and that the *Original Text* is in many places corrupted, ſo as that it may and ought to be corrected by Tranſlations, eſpecially that of the LXX, with ſundry other ſuch imaginations, which they countenance with uncertain conjectures, and fabulous ſtories. And I cannot but wonder how ſome ſeem to take *Shelter unto their Opinions*, eſpecially that of preferring the *Tranſlation of the LXX* unto the Original *Hebrew Text*, or as they fondly ſpeak, the preſent Copy of it, in the *Church of England*, whoſe *publickly Authorized and excellent Tranſlation*, takes no more notice, nor hath any more regard unto that Tranſlation, when it differs from the *Hebrew*, as it doth in a thouſand places, then if it had never been in the world. And as no Tranſlations are in common uſe in the whole world, but what were immediately traduced out of the *Hebrew Original*, excepting only ſome *parts of the Vulgar Latine*; ſo I verily believe, that thoſe very Chriſtians who contend for a *preference* to be given unto that of the LXX, now they have got their Ends, or at leaſt attempted them in procuring a reputation of Learning, Skill and Cunning by their *writings about it*, would not dare to adviſe a Tranſlation out of that to be made and compoſed for the uſe of *that*

Church

Church which they adhere unto, be it what it will; to the rejection and excluſion of that taken out of the Original. And to have two recommended unto common uſe, ſo diſcrepant as they would be found to be, would certainly be of more diſadvantage to the Church, then by all their Endeavours otherwiſe they can compenſate. Yea I am apt to think, that they will not be very urgent for an alteration to be made in the *Churches Tranſlation* in thoſe particular inſtances wherein they hope they have won themſelves much reputation, in proving the *miſtakes of the Hebrew*, and manifeſting how it may be rectified by the *Tranſlation* of the LXX. For whatever thoughts may be in their minds concerning their learned Diſputes, I doubt not but they have more reverence of God and his Word, then to break in upon it with ſuch a kind of violence, on any pretence whatſoever. As therefore the integrity and purity of the Scripture in the *Original Languages* may be proved and defended againſt all oppoſition, with whatever belongs thereunto, ſo we muſt aſcribe their preſervation to the watchful care, and powerful operation of the Spirit of God abſolutely ſecuring them throughout all Generations.

FINIS.

FINIS

ERRATA.

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